

From Critique of Modernity to Political Project: İsmet Özel and İstiklâl Marşı Derneği (2007-2024)

Hilal Aydos



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THESIS ADVISOR

Professor Nadir Özbek _____

Atatürk Institute for Modern Turkish History

Boğaziçi University

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Professor Halim Kara _____

Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences,

Department of Turkish Language and Literature

Boğaziçi University

Assistant Professor Erdal Kurğan _____

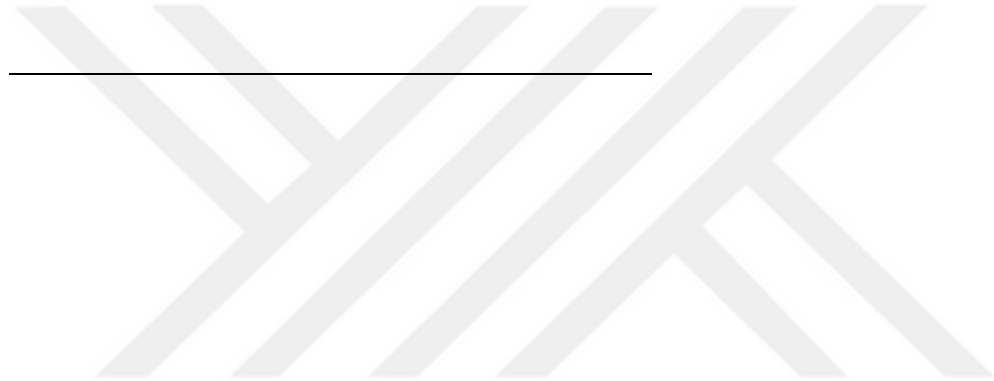
Institute of Middle Eastern and Islamic Countries,

Department of Sociology and Anthropology of Middle East

Marmara University

Declaration of Originality

The intellectual content of this thesis, which has been written by me and for which I take full responsibility, is my own, original work, and it has not been previously or concurrently submitted elsewhere for any other examination or degree of higher education. The sources of all paraphrased and quoted materials, concepts, and ideas are fully cited, and the admissible contributions and assistance of others with respect to the conception of the work as well as to linguistic expression are explicitly acknowledged herein.



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Abstract

From Critique of Modernity to Political Project: İsmet Özel and İstiklâl Marşı Derneği (2007-2024)

Hilal Aydos, Master's Candidate at the Atatürk Institute for Modern Turkish History at Boğaziçi University, 2025

Professor Nadir Özbek, Thesis Advisor

This thesis examines whether İsmet Özel's theoretical vision within Islamist thought can be transformed into a political movement through İstiklâl Marşı Derneği (İMDER, Association for the Turkish National Anthem). The study first situates Özel's intellectual corpus—which began to take shape in the political climate of the 1960s and is founded upon critiques of modernity, capitalism, and Western civilization—within the traditions of Islamism and modern thought in Türkiye. It then analyzes how this theoretical framework became institutionalized in the organizational structure, symbolic repertoire, and political discourse of İMDER, which was established under Özel's leadership in 2007.

A thematic analysis of the association's publication, the journal *Çelimli Çalım*, reveals efforts to reinterpret İstiklâl Marşı (The Turkish National Anthem) as a manifesto, define Turkishness within the axis of an Islamic mission, and construct alternative visions in the fields of history, language, and economics. By integrating intellectual history, discourse analysis, and institutional examination, the thesis makes three original contributions: it investigates the understudied link between intellectual critique and organizational practice; proposes a methodological model for analyzing the text-institution relationship; and positions İMDER within the literature on nationalism, modernity, and Islamism.

34,000 words

Özet

Modernite Eleştirisinden Siyasi Projeye: İsmet Özel ve İstiklâl Marşı Derneği (2007-2024)

Hilal Aydos, Boğaziçi Üniversitesi Atatürk İlkeleri ve İnkılap Tarihi Enstitüsü Yüksek Lisans Öğrencisi, 2025

Profesör Nadir Özbek, Tez Danışmanı

Bu tez, İsmet Özel'in İslamcı düşünce içerisindeki teorik vizyonunun İstiklâl Marşı Derneği (İMDER) aracılığıyla siyasi bir harekete dönüştürölüp dönüştürölemeyeceğini incelemektedir. Çalışma, öncelikle Özel'in 1960'ların politik ikliminde şekillenmeye başlayan ve modernite, kapitalizm ile Batı medeniyeti eleştirisi üzerine kurulu entelektüel birikimini, Türkiye'deki İslamcılık ve modern düşünce geleneği içerisinde konumlandırmaktadır. Ardından, bu teorik çerçevenin 2007'de Özel öncülüğünde kurulan İMDER'in örgütsel yapısında, sembolik repertuvarında ve siyasi söyleminde nasıl kurumsallaştığını analiz etmektedir.

Derneğin yayın organı *Çelimli Çalım* dergisi üzerine yapılan tematik analiz, İstiklâl Marşı'nın bir manifesto olarak yeniden yorumlanması, Türklüğün İslami bir misyon ekseninde tanımlanması ve tarih, dil ile ekonomi alanlarında alternatif vizyonlar inşa edilmesi yönündeki çabaları ortaya koymaktadır. Entelektüel tarih, söylem analizi ve kurumsal incelemeyi bir araya getiren tez, üç özgün katkı sunmaktadır: entelektüel eleştiri ile örgütsel pratik arasındaki yetersiz çalışılmış bağı incelemekte; metin-kurum ilişkisini analiz etmek için yöntemsel bir model önermekte; ve İMDER'i milliyetçilik, modernite ve İslamcılık literatürü bağlamında konumlandırmaktadır.

34,000 kelime



“What is the use of talking! And there is no end of talking—
There is no end of things in the heart”

Ezra Pound

To my father



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Abbreviations and Acronyms

AKP	Justice and Development Party
CENTO	Central Treaty Organization
CHP	Republican People's Party
DP	Democrat Party
EU	European Union
FKF	Federation of Idea Clubs
IMF	International Monetary Fund
İMDER	Association for the Turkish National Anthem
MDD	National Democratic Revolution
MHP	Nationalist Movement Party
MSP	National Salvation Party
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
RP	Welfare Party
SBF	Faculty of Political Sciences
TİP	Workers' Party of Türkiye
TİYO	Full Independence Publishing Partnership
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
WUNC	Worthiness, Unity, Numbers, and Commitment

Appendices

Appendix A: Sample Materials and Analysis from *Çelimli Çalım*

Figure A1: Cover of *Çelimli Çalım*, Issue 3 (September 2014).

Source: *Çelimli Çalım* Archive.

Figure A2: Cover of *Çelimli Çalım*, Issue 7 (January 2015).

Source: *Çelimli Çalım* Archive.

Figure A3: Cover of *Çelimli Çalım*, Issue 9 (March 2015).

Source: *Çelimli Çalım* Archive.

Figure A4: Cover of *Çelimli Çalım*, Issue 17 (November 2015).

Source: *Çelimli Çalım* Archive.

Figure A5: Cover of *Çelimli Çalım*, Issue 18 (December 2015).

Source: *Çelimli Çalım* Archive.

Table A1: Thematic Analysis of Content in *Çelimli Çalım*.

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Introduction

Islamism in Türkiye is a complex intellectual-political movement notable for the ambiguity of its definitional boundaries and its transformations throughout its historical course. As Yasin Aktay emphasizes, this ambiguity stems primarily from the question of "which characteristics should be used to distinguish Islamist discourse."¹ Indeed, the fact that even the demand for Sharia can be considered "diluted" and "banal" within Islamist circles is a striking example that reveals the conceptual diversity and broad spectrum within the movement.² Within the foundational secular structure of the Republic, the coding of Islamism as "reactionism" (*irtica*) blocked the movement's channels for democratic political participation, leading to the expression of Islamic demands through the language and concepts of secular politics, such as "freedom of religion and conscience," "democracy," "family values," and "morality."³

This state of definitional ambiguity and exclusion, as pointed out by Aktay, also laid the groundwork for what Tanıl Bora characterizes as a "defense reflex." According to Tanıl Bora, the term "Islamism" was not embraced for a long time even by those defined as Islamists, because the

¹ Yasin Aktay, "Sunuş" in *Modern Türkiye'de Siyasi Düşünce: İslamcılık*, ed. Tanıl Bora and Murat Gültekingil (İstanbul: iletişim Yayınları, 2005), 14.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid., 15.

"political ideology and societal vision centered around Islam" attributed to Islamism was already accepted as a natural requirement of being Muslim. Bora stresses that Islamism's political claim must therefore be considered "in connection with a defensive reflex."⁴ According to Aktay's broader and more inclusive definition, Islamism encompasses "any Muslim formation that places Islam at the center of political practice, regardless of what kind of interpretation of Islam it holds."⁵ Michelangelo Guida and Ömer Çaha also draw attention to this conceptual ambiguity, noting that the concept of Islamism was first used in Turkish literature by Yusuf Akçura, but in later periods it began to be seen as synonymous with reactionism, and many authors refrained from using it.⁶ This observation overlaps with Bora's finding that the term Islamism was not embraced for a long time even by its own actors, pointing to how the movement's legitimacy has been a contested field.

Bora's emphasis on the "defense reflex" coincides with the views that the primary concern of Islamist thought in Türkiye is not so much the establishment of a Sharia state, but rather a search for a collective consensus that transcends the secular-religious tension. According to Ahmet Çiğdem, however, the main issue of Islamism in Türkiye is the search for "a collective consensus based on the rejection of the tension between the religious and the secular, rather than establishing a political order where Sharia principles can be applied."⁷ This quest led Islamist intellectuals to assume the mission of "carrying what is in society to thought, and what is in thought to society" but Islamist thought failed to develop a consistent and systematic form to facilitate this mission.⁸ As Çiğdem points out, it is remarkable that in Türkiye's 300-year

⁴ Tanıl Bora, *Cereyanlar: Türkiye'de Siyasi İdeolojiler* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2021), 415.

⁵ Aktay, "Sunuş," 18.

⁶ Michelangelo Guida and Ömer Çaha, "İslâmcılık," in *Dünyada ve Türkiye'de Siyasal İdeolojiler*, ed. Ömer Çaha and Bican Şahin (İstanbul: Orion Kitapevi, 2013), 564.

⁷ Ahmet Çiğdem, "İslamcılık ve Türkiye Üzerine Bazı Notlar," in *Modern Türkiye'de Siyasi Düşünce: İslamcılık*, ed. Tanıl Bora and Murat Gültekingil (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2005), 26.

⁸ Ibid., 32.

modernization adventure, religiosity and society did not fully overlap, and interstitial layers always remained in between.⁹

In contrast to Çiğdem's emphasis on a "quest," names like İsmail Kara and Bedri Gencer place Islamism within a more historical and ideological framework, stressing that it emerged as a reaction to the modernization process. For İsmail Kara, Islamism is a movement that aimed to make Islam dominant in life as a whole ("faith, worship, morality, philosophy, politics, law, education...") in the 19th and 20th centuries. This movement aimed to rationally save Muslims from Western exploitation, tyrannical rulers, imitation (*taqlid*), and superstitions; and to civilize, unite, and develop them. İsmail Kara states that within this framework, Islamism signifies "the entirety of political, intellectual, and scholarly studies with dominant activist, modernist, and eclectic aspects."¹⁰

Bedri Gencer defines Islamism as "an ideology produced by the secularization process brought about by modernization that began in the Islamic world under the influence of the West, which became a global power in the 19th century."¹¹ According to him, Islamism, in its historical process, moved away from its reactive character against Western hegemony and evolved into a "civilizational" discourse.

To summarize, the distinct emphases within the scholarship demonstrate that Islamism is a multifaceted phenomenon. The foci on "definitional ambiguity" (Aktay), the "defensive reflex" (Bora), and the "search" (Çiğdem) mirror the movement's complex dialectic involving exclusion, identity formation, and the pursuit of legitimacy. Conversely, the historical framework provided by Kara and Gencer positions this tension as a structural outcome of modernization. This study aims to contribute to this body of literature by analyzing the possibilities and constraints involved in the translation of these intellectual pursuits into a political movement, using the case of İsmet Özel and İMDER.

⁹ Ibid., 33.

¹⁰ İsmail Kara, "Türkiye'de İslamcılık Düşüncesi ve Hareketi Üzerine Birkaç Not," in *Türkiye'de İslamcılık Düşüncesi ve Hareketi Sempozyum Tebliğleri*, ed. İsmail Kara ve Asım Öz (İstanbul: Zeytinburnu Belediyesi Kültür Yayınları, 2013), 17.

¹¹ Bedri Gencer, "Şeriatçılıktan Medeniyetçiliğe İslamcılık: Bir İslamcılık Tipolojisine Doğru," in *Türkiye'de İslamcılık Düşüncesi ve Hareketi Sempozyum Tebliğleri*, ed. İsmail Kara ve Asım Öz (İstanbul: Zeytinburnu Belediyesi Kültür Yayınları, 2013), 69.

As İsmet Özel (1978) presciently warned, this very adoption of a secular concept like “civilization” to define Islam created an inherent paradox from the outset.¹² In Burhanettin Duran's observations on the Second Constitutional Era, Mehmet Akif's "truth-false civilization" (*hak/batıl medeniyet*) distinction transformed into a "clash of Eastern-Western civilizations" in the works of Necip Fazıl and Sezai Karakoç during the post-Republic period.¹³ Following the end of the Cold War in the early 1990s, the discourse of “Islamic civilization,” which was shaped in part by Huntington's “clash of civilizations” thesis, was instrumentalized as part of a “one globalization, many civilizations” formula, ultimately transforming into an empty rhetoric that served to reinforce global capitalism.¹⁴

The emergence of Islamism as a response to modernization and Western expansionism necessitates acknowledging its global context as well. Guida and Çaha situate the emergence of Islamism within the broader framework of colonialism and Western ascendancy. According to them, "with Napoleon's Egyptian expedition, the West's military, scientific, and cultural superiority over the Islamic world became apparent; the first reaction to these humiliating conditions came from Muslim intellectuals. Within this context of reactions, the most important and noteworthy intellectual movement seeking to overcome the negative circumstances faced by the Islamic world was Islamism."¹⁵ This perspective highlights that the modernization attempts of the Ottoman Empire were shaped not only by internal dynamics but also by global

¹² İsmet Özel, *Üç Mesele: Teknik, Medeniyet, Yabancılaşma* (İstanbul: Düşünce Yayınları, 1978), as cited in Bedri Gencer, "Şeriatçılıktan Medeniyetçiliğe İslâmcılık: Bir İslâmcılık Tipolojisine Doğru," in *Türkiye'de İslâmcılık Düşüncesi ve Hareketi Sempozyum Tebliğleri*, edited by İsmail Kara and Asım Öz (İstanbul: Zeytinburnu Belediyesi Kültür Yayınları, 2013), 90.

¹³ Burhanettin Duran, “Cumhuriyet Dönemi İslâmcılığı İdeolojik Konumları, Dönüşümü ve Evreleri” (publication details unknown), as cited in Bedri Gencer, “Şeriatçılıktan Medeniyetçiliğe İslâmcılık: Bir İslâmcılık Tipolojisine Doğru,” in *Türkiye'de İslâmcılık Düşüncesi ve Hareketi Sempozyum Tebliğleri*, ed. İsmail Kara and Asım Öz (İstanbul: Zeytinburnu Belediyesi Kültür Yayınları, 2013), 89.

¹⁴ Gencer, “Şeriatçılıktan Medeniyetçiliğe İslâmcılık: Bir İslâmcılık Tipolojisine Doğru,” 87.

¹⁵ Guida and Çaha, “İslâmcılık,” 566.

political and military challenges, thereby situating Ottoman Islamism within a wider world-historical confrontation with Western imperialism.

As Kara notes, although the roots of this idea extend back to the reign of Selim III, the concept of "İttihad-ı İslam" (Union of Islam) gained central importance especially after 1870.¹⁶ With the Tanzimat and Islahat Edicts, issues such as religion-state relations, equality (*müşavât*) debates, and the transformation of the caliphate-sultanate system came to the fore. Sultan Abdulhamid II's Pan-Islamism policies strengthened the idea of Islamic unity but also led to conflicts with constitutionalist intellectuals. The "school-madrasa duality" that emerged in this period is an indicator of a mentality shift and prepared the ground for laying the intellectual foundations of Islamism. Islamist thinkers accepted the West's technical superiority but argued that the real solution lay in a return to the essence of Islam.¹⁷

With the proclamation of the Second Constitutional Monarchy (1908), Islamism emerged on the stage as an independent ideological movement. During this period, journals such as *Sırat-ı Müstakim* (later *Sebilürreşad*) became the most important carriers of Islamist thought. Islamists supported the constitutional regime and opposed Abdulhamid's autocratic rule. At the same time, there was intense intellectual interaction with the *al-Manar* circle in Egypt (Muhammad Abduh, Rashid Rida). Islamist thinkers were divided between modernist and traditionalist tendencies; during the Balkan Wars and World War I, the ummatist discourse gained strength. This period ended with the abolition of the caliphate in 1924.¹⁸

The establishment of the Republic, as Kara also pointed out, created a radical rupture for Islamist thought, carrying it into a distinct phase. The generational transformations within this new phase are of critical importance for understanding Islamism's efforts to adapt to its changing conditions. The intellectuals of this period, whom Ali Bulaç defines as the "first generation of Islamists," sought the solution to the Ottoman

¹⁶ İsmail Kara, "Türkiye'de İslamcılık Düşüncesi ve Hareketi," 22.

¹⁷ Ibid., 22-23.

¹⁸ Ibid., 23-26.

Empire's crisis in the idea of "returning to the origins of Islam."¹⁹ This generation, possessing a stronger foundation in the core Islamic sciences compared to previous generations, included profound figures from among the ulema of the time.²⁰ Two main factors shaped their thought: the military-political-economic decline of the Ottoman Empire and the new order created by the 1856 Islahat Edict. According to Bulaç, although the intentions of the state could be somewhat read during the seventeen years following the Tanzimat Edict (1839), with the Islahat Edict, the "subconscious of the Tanzimat" was revealed, and it became clear that a new system operating to the disadvantage of Muslims was being implemented.²¹

The abolition of the caliphate in 1924, the closing of Sufi lodges (*tekkes*), and the abolition of the Ministry of Sharia (Şeriye Vekaleti) created a radical rupture in Islamist thought.²² The ulema and Sufi circles that played an active role in the War of Independence were this time defined as an "irtica" (reactionism) threat by the founding cadres of the Republic.²³ According to Kara, the effort seen in Ottoman modernization to "reconcile modernization with religion" was abandoned in the Republic; the new regulations directly targeted religion.²⁴ In Kara's analysis, conceptualized as the "Conservatism-Nationalism Period," in this historical phase, since Islamist discourse could not find direct expression, it sustained itself by permeating nationalist-conservative discourse.²⁵ Nurettin Topçu's *Hareket* journal and Necip Fazıl Kısakürek's *Büyük Doğu* journal represented Islamic references dissolved within a nationalist discourse. In the same period, Sufi orders and communities followed a strategy of silent resistance, consciously

¹⁹ Ali Bulaç, "İslâm'ın Üç Siyaset Tarzı veya İslâmcıların Üç Nesli," in *Modern Türkiye'de Siyasi Düşünce: İslamcılık*, ed. Tanıl Bora and Murat Gültekingil (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2005), 48.

²⁰ Ibid., 56.

²¹ Ibid., 52-53.

²² Kara, "Türkiye'de İslâmcılık Düşüncesi ve Hareketi," 27-28.

²³ Ibid., 27.

²⁴ İsmail Kara, "Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı: Devletle Müslümanalar Arasında Bir Kurum," in *Modern Türkiye'de Siyasi Düşünce: İslamcılık*, ed. Tanıl Bora and Murat Gültekingil (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2005), 179.

²⁵ Kara, "Türkiye'de İslâmcılık Düşüncesi ve Hareketi," 28.

avoiding direct confrontation with the state.²⁶ With the 1950s, the transition to multi-party life, the opening of Imam Hatip schools, and the increase in religious publishing activities allowed Islamism to regain visibility.²⁷ According to Bora, the "silence" of these years was not merely passive acceptance but also an "active endurance." Islamist circles adapted to the environment based on the interpretation in Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*) that "states of necessity make the forbidden permissible" and the Qur'anic injunction to "arm yourselves with the weapon of the enemy." This pragmatism indicates a long period of dormancy lasting until the 1950s and even the 1960s.²⁸

The 1960 coup triggered a transition to an "intellectual and radical" phase in Islamist thought.²⁹ The translation into Turkish of works by Islamist thinkers like Sayyid Qutb and Mawdudi spread a new "Salafi-minded" understanding of Islam, which led to conflicts with traditional Sufi circles. In the same period, while *Diriliş* journal emphasized Islam-civilization, Necmettin Erbakan's National Outlook (Milli Görüş) movement came to the fore with its claim to transform the system. The 1979 Iranian Revolution had a strong impact on radical Islamists in Türkiye. Kara states that this process overshadowed Türkiye's own accumulation of Islamism and weakened the connection of translation-focused thought with local history.³⁰

Menderes Çınar identifies "Islamist Kemalism" as a concept exposing striking parallels between Islamism and Kemalism.³¹ Both ideologies frame modernization as a cultural project – Kemalism by emulating Western culture, Islamism by reviving Islamic traditions. Each positions politics as a tool for social transformation, employs top-down social engineering, and imposes its singular truth on society, rejecting pluralist democracy.³² Aktay emphasizes that Islamism generally becomes

²⁶ Kara, "Türkiye'de İslamcılık Düşüncesi ve Hareketi," 30.

²⁷ Ibid., 29-30.

²⁸ Bora, *Cereyanlar*, 419.

²⁹ Kara, "Türkiye'de İslamcılık Düşüncesi ve Hareketi," 31.

³⁰ Ibid., 31-34.

³¹ Menderes Çınar, "Kemalist Cumhuriyetçilik ve İslamcı Kemalizm," in *Modern Türkiye'de Siyasi Düşünce: İslamcılık*, ed. Tanıl Bora and Murat Gültekinil (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2005), 173-174.

³² Ibid.

prominent "in times when Islam is thought to be under attack."³³ In the specific context of Türkiye, Islamism developed a discourse expressing "the unfulfilled aspiration of an incomplete liberation struggle."³⁴ According to Bora, in Türkiye, Islamism was one of the main pillars of right-wing politics from the mid-1940s to the 1970s.³⁵ The main agenda of this period was "anti-Kemalist revanchism"; particularly journals like *Büyük Doğu* and *Sebilürreşad* centered this theme. With Necip Fazıl's book *Ulu Hakan Abdülhamid Han* [*The Great Sovereign Abdulhamid Khan*] published in 1965, Islamism drew from an Abdulhamidian revisionism and strengthened its desire to settle accounts with Kemalism through this line.³⁶

The 1980s and 90s marked a turning point in Islamism's relationship with the state. With the end of the Cold War and the impact of globalization, Islamist movements underwent profound changes in their classical discourses and strategies. The September 12, 1980 coup was a critical turning point for Islamism. The coup coded Islamism as an "irtica" threat but paradoxically integrated it into the system with a "moderate Islam" discourse.³⁷ With the Özal period, Islamist votes were channeled into a liberal-conservative line, and Sufi orders and communities gained legitimacy by reconciling with the state. In this process, while political Islam was marginalized, global discourses such as "interfaith dialogue" and "legal pluralism" were adopted.³⁸ Even Welfare Party's (Refah Partisi) "just order" (*âdil düzen*) rhetoric was articulated with liberal market language; practices like interest-free banking integrated with US-backed capital. Thus, Islamic economics was integrated into capitalism. With Justice and Development Party's (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi, AKP) rise to power, this process became institutionalized; Islamism lost its original claims and became the language of the state. Kara argues that this adaptation destroyed Islamism's oppositional character and made it part of the neoliberal

³³ Aktay, "Sunuş," 20.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Bora, *Cereyanlar*, 437.

³⁶ Ibid., 440-41.

³⁷ Kara, "Türkiye'de İslâmcılık Düşüncesi ve Hareketi," 35.

³⁸ Ibid., 34-35.

order.³⁹ Bulaç defines this post-2000 profile, which he terms the "third generation of Islamists," as consisting of individuals who have completed the process of urbanization, engage with issues such as globalization and EU membership, and exhibit distinct discourse and tools compared to previous generations.⁴⁰

According to Olivier Roy, since the 1990s, Islamist movements have moved away from their classical internationalist line, become incorporated into national politics, grown more conservative, and become de-ideologized.⁴¹ Roy defines the period of 2000s and beyond through the concept of "post-Islamism."⁴² The goal of capturing the state has been replaced by the Islamization of daily life and the prominence of moral conservatism in the social sphere.⁴³ In Türkiye, this transformation materialized with the closure of the Welfare Party (Refah Partisi, RP) and the subsequent establishment of AKP, which defined itself within a framework similar to Christian Democrats; with Islamic references shifting from the political center to the cultural-social arena, it developed a "conservative-democratic" discourse.⁴⁴

This second part of the literature demonstrates the evolution of Islamism throughout the history of the Republic and, ultimately, its transformation into what has been termed "post-Islamism." As Kara and Bora have pointed out, the movement initially sustained itself by dissolving into a national-conservative discourse, gained a more radical intellectual vein after the 1960s, and was profoundly transformed by the contradictory legacy of the September 12 coup and the liberal openings of the Özal era. The process defined by Roy's concept of "post-Islamism" involves the replacement of the goal of capturing the state with the Islamization of daily life, and its eventual integration into the system through a conservative-democratic discourse, as seen in the case of the

³⁹ Ibid., 35-37.

⁴⁰ Bulaç, "İslâm'ın Üç Siyaset Tarzı," 49-50.

⁴¹ Oliver Roy, "İslamcı Hareketlerin Sıradanlaşması," in *Modern Türkiye'de Siyasi Düşünce: İslâmcılık*, ed. Tanıl Bora and Murat Gültekingil (İstanbul: iletişim Yayınları, 2005), 928-929

⁴² Ibid., 934.

⁴³ Ibid. 932.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 931-932.

AKP. The thought of İsmet Özel and the practice of İMDER can be read precisely as a radical objection to this process of “institutionalization” and “integration with the system,” and an effort to construct an alternative line. While this endeavor passes through all the historical phases described in the literature, it is notable for its quality of aiming to transcend them.

Amid this broad spectrum within the literature on Islamism, İsmet Özel holds a unique position due to his intellectual journey from a socialist past to Islamism, the radical nature of his critique of modernity, and his uncompromising stance towards the system. According to Yasin Aktay and Ertan Özensel, İsmet Özel's distinctive position in Islamist thought lies in his progression from a socialist-leftist background to Islamism. Operating within an existential-ontological framework, Özel made the most significant contribution to the process of self-recognition and self-definition in Turkish Islamism and played a decisive role in its acquisition of self-consciousness.⁴⁵ In his "world-system" analyses, Özel questioned the all-encompassing nature of modernity and called upon Muslims to seek intellectual autonomy against such a system.⁴⁶ On the other hand, Özel's conspiratorial approach to the world system and his authoritarian tone have been criticized for leading to a cynicism that renders political action meaningless.⁴⁷ His recent severing of ties with the Islamist circle can be associated with his emphasis on Turkish identity not finding sufficient resonance within the Islamic community.⁴⁸

Çiğdem describes Özel as "perhaps the most original name in Islamist thought in the last fifteen years." Although he carries the identity of poet-thinker in the line of Mehmet Akif, Necip Fazıl, and Sezai Karakoç, in Özel these two aspects coexist through "a fragile compromise where one does not crush the other and neither takes precedence over the other."⁴⁹

⁴⁵ Yasin Aktay and Ertan Özensel, “İsmet Özel: Dostların Eşiğindeki Diaspora,” in *Modern Türkiye’de Siyasi Düşünce: İslamcılık*, ed. Tanıl Bora and Murat Gültekingil (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2005), 782.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 788-790.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 790-791.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 794-795.

⁴⁹ Ahmet Çiğdem, *Taşra Epiği: Türk İdeolojileri ve İslamcılık* (İstanbul: Birikim Yayınları, 2001), 140.

According to Çiğdem, since *Üç Mesele* [*Three Issues*], Özel has guided the theoretical framework of Islamist thought; developing a distant attitude towards concepts like "technique, civilization, alienation, science, state, etc.," he constructed a unique intellectual space. However, instead of developing an absolute rejection of Western thought, he displayed a selective approach by distinguishing between the political and the philosophical West. What makes his understanding of Islam unique is that he sees Islam not as material for a political ideology but as "first and foremost an area of ontological security and salvation," and conceptualizes being Muslim as "a state of individual capability and competence."⁵⁰ However, Çiğdem notes that despite this originality, Özel failed to establish a hegemonic line within Islamism; his influence remained limited to contributing to the differentiation within the Islamist movement between "provincial puritan populism" and "compliant political liberalism."⁵¹

Bora also sees Özel as the "last and perhaps the most effective" in the lineage of "wisdom poets" (*hikemi şairler*) like Sezai Karakoç, Cahit Zarifoğlu, Nuri Pakdil, Alaeddin Özdenören, and Erdem Bayazit. According to Bora, Özel is "outside the traditionalist-traditional language, outside the right-wing line in symbiosis with nationalist-conservative mediocrity, and outside the existentialist literary discourse." His "attaining guidance not from the Westernist camp but from the Marxist left" constitutes his unusual beginning within Islamism. Bora emphasizes that Özel, unlike Sezai Karakoç, was not in search of an "alternative civilization" but rather rejected the concept of "civilization" itself; instead of a radical reckoning with the system, he proposed "conscious alienation" and remaining outside on a mental/moral level.⁵² He notes that his thought, which from the 1990s onward was shaped around a discourse of "foreign powers," combined with an emphasis on "Turkishness" (*Türklük*) in the 2000s and became institutionalized in

⁵⁰ Ibid., 141.

⁵¹ Ibid., 142

⁵² Ibid., 450-51.

İstiklâl Marşı Derneği (Association for Turkish National Anthem, hereafter İMDER).⁵³

Ercan Yıldırım highlights İsmet Özel's position as an "internal critic" within Islamist thought, emphasizing how he concretized his critiques by distancing himself from certain generally accepted tenets of Islamism, such as sympathy for the Iranian Revolution, the presumed innocence of Western technology, and the politics of Turgut Özal and the February 28 process.⁵⁴ Özel's emphasis on "Türkiye's unique conditions" within the framework of his search for a "third way" distinguishes him within Islamist discourse.⁵⁵ According to Yıldırım, although Özel's theoretical stance is recognized as "truthful" (makbul) in Islamist circles, it has not been adopted as a practical-political guide. The rhetoric of "İsmet Özel is right, but..." reflects the paradoxical positioning of his ideas – which often anticipated Türkiye's political agenda – in an intermediate space where they are neither fully internalized nor entirely rejected.⁵⁶ İsmail Kara evaluates İsmet Özel as the "last great name" of Islamist thought. According to him, except for Nurettin Topçu, no "important and different" thought could be produced within the framework of Islamism during the Republican period; with Özel, a new level was reached in Republican-era Islamism.⁵⁷ Therefore, Özel's importance stems not only from his identity as a man of letters but also from his capacity to rethink and transform Republican-era Islamism with an original theoretical framework.

Academic studies on Islamism in modern Türkiye have generally concentrated around four axes: (1) prominent figures notable for their intellectual production (like Mehmet Akif, Nurettin Topçu, Sezai Karakoç), (2) political parties and the leaders representing them (the line extending from National Order Party to AKP), (3) periodical

⁵³ Ibid., 453.

⁵⁴ Ercan Yıldırım, "İslamcılığa Muhalif Bir İslamcı: İsmet Özel, in *Türkiye'de İslamcılık Düşüncesi ve Hareketi Sempozyum Tebliğleri*, ed. İsmail Kara ve Asım Öz (İstanbul: Zeytinburnu Belediyesi Kültür Yayınları, 2013), 310.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 308-309.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 332.

⁵⁷ İsmail Kara, *Türkiye'de İslamcılık Düşüncesi 1: Metinler ve Kişiler*, 2. Baskı (İstanbul: Dergâh Yayınları, 2014), 10.

publication analyses, and (4) mass movements (Sufi orders and communities). This literature is quite rich in terms of examining Islamist thought through both texts and political institutions. However, the process of an intellectual vision transforming into an institutional structure – that is, the transfer of an intellectual framework into politics through organizational practices and the tensions and limitations that emerge in this process – has not been sufficiently studied.

In the specific case of İsmet Özel, the situation is even more pronounced. According to YÖK Thesis Center data, a total of 45 theses have been prepared on Özel, comprising 10 doctoral and 35 master's theses. However, the majority of these studies concentrate on Özel's poetry, poetics, and intellectual concerns, while his institutional impact remains largely neglected. Only one of these theses deals directly with İMDER (Duran, 2020), and even there, the structure and activities of the association are examined only categorically; no in-depth analysis of the publication contents is made. At the level of academic articles, while there is intense interest in Özel's poetry and thought world, there is no study that directly centers İMDER. Therefore, how Özel's theoretical framework was attempted to be transformed into a political movement through İMDER and the limitations of this process constitute a significant gap in the literature.

This study aims to fill this gap by addressing the following fundamental question: To what extent and within which limitations can İMDER be evaluated as an attempt to transform İsmet Özel's theoretical Islamist vision into a political movement?

In seeking an answer to this research question, it is necessary to clarify the theoretical foundation and primary sources of the study. The analysis is grounded in two main pillars. First, to establish the intellectual framework of İsmet Özel, the study relies primarily on his own works, including *Waldo Sen Neden Burada Değilsin, Bir Akşam Gezintisi Değil Bir İstiklal Yürüyüşü, Üç Zor Mesele*, and *Cuma Mektupları - I & II*. These texts are used to trace the internal consistency and historical evolution of Özel's stance on modernity, civilization, technology, and Turkish identity.

Second, to examine the institutionalization of this thought, the association's journal *Çelimli Çalım* (published in 18 issues between 2014 and 2015) was selected as the primary data source. This journal was analyzed using Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis method. This flexible qualitative approach was chosen for its capacity to identify both semantic (explicit) and latent (underlying) themes pertinent to the research question.⁵⁸ The analytical process followed their six-phase framework: familiarizing with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report.⁵⁹ During the familiarization phase, all 18 issues were read in detail, and initial codes and themes were generated inductively from meaningfully recurring patterns. This thematic map was then reviewed and finalized in light of the thesis's focal points and İsmet Özel's theoretical framework, ensuring a systematic and reliable identification of İMDER's ideological orientation and political claims.

The interpretation of the findings and the assessment of İMDER's potential for political transformation are framed by a multi-dimensional theoretical framework. This framework integrates complementary perspectives from social and political theory: Max Weber's analysis of charismatic authority is employed to examine the leadership structure centered around İsmet Özel; Samuel P. Huntington's theory of institutionalization provides criteria to evaluate the organization's stability and adaptability; Sidney Tarrow's concepts of political opportunity structures and repertoires of contention help conceptualize its mobilization strategies; and Charles Tilly's model of social movements and the "WUNC" (worthiness, unity, numbers, commitment) factors offer a gauge for measuring its claim-making and legitimacy.

The analytical process unfolded in three stages, which structure the empirical chapters of the thesis. First, Chapter 2 delineates İsmet Özel's theoretical framework based on his works. Second, Chapter 3 applies the multi-dimensional theoretical framework (Weber, Huntington, Tarrow,

⁵⁸ Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke, "Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology," *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 3, no. 2 (2006): 13-15, <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 16-23.

Tilly) to assess İMDER's overall structure and political potential as an organization. Finally, Chapter 4 presents an in-depth thematic analysis of the *Çelimli Çalım* journal to reveal the concrete ideological content and discursive strategies through which Özel's thought is institutionalized. This combined analytical lens facilitates a nuanced understanding of the possibilities and limitations inherent in the transition from intellectual vision to organizational practice.

The contribution of the research is threefold. First, it offers a theoretical contribution to Islamism studies by analyzing how an intellectual vision is (or is not) implemented at the organizational level. Second, it provides a methodological contribution by analyzing the text-institution relationship through the thematic analysis of the *Çelimli Çalım* journal. Third, it fills a largely neglected area in the literature: it offers a comprehensive examination of how (or how not) Özel's thoughts were translated into practice at the institutional level through İMDER.



İsmet Özel: Intellectual Transformation in Context

2.1. Biographical Framework

İsmet Özel was born on September 19, 1944, in Kayseri, the sixth child of a father who was a police officer and a graduate of the Rüştiye (Ottoman secondary school) and a mother who had attended primary school during the reign of Sultan Mehmed V Reşad.⁶⁰ In his own words, "The family I was born into bore no characteristics that could foster any sense of superiority."⁶¹ He describes the period of his birth as "the days when the Allied forces crossed the German borders" and emphasizes that this historical moment shaped his personality more than his family background.⁶²

Due to his father's profession, the family moved frequently and eventually settled in Kastamonu in 1947.⁶³ Özel describes his childhood there as shaped by "the advantages of being a policeman's child despite the disadvantages of provincial life."⁶⁴ His poem "*Kış*" [*Winter*], written

⁶⁰ İbrahim Tüzer, *İsmet Özel: Şiire Damıtılmış Bir Hayat* (Ankara: Akçağ Yayınları, 2020), 24-25.

⁶¹ İsmet Özel, *Waldo Sen Neden Burada Değilsin* (İstanbul: Tam İstiklâl Yayıncılık Ortaklığı, 2020), 21.

⁶² Ibid., 31.

⁶³ Tüzer, *İsmet Özel*, 29.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 29-30.

in the third grade of primary school and published in a newspaper in Ankara, marked his first encounter with literature.⁶⁵

The family's move to Çankırı in 1955, where Özel attended middle school, and then to Ankara in 1959, was decisive for his intellectual formation. He graduated from Gazi High School in 1962.⁶⁶ During this period, he benefited extensively from Ankara's cultural resources and immersed himself in intensive reading, which laid the foundation for his engagement with politics.⁶⁷ He criticized his religious education with the words, "We were left to the official view of the state."⁶⁸ His disappointment upon reading a Qur'an translation pushed him towards irreligion: "I concluded that hostility to religion was the most suitable attitude for a human being."⁶⁹

In 1962, Özel enrolled in the Faculty of Political Science (SBF) at Ankara University, where he embraced socialism amidst the political mobilization of the era.⁷⁰ He attributes this choice to an inner quest, stating, "No one ever made an effort to persuade me into leftist views."⁷¹ He soon joined the SBF Idea Club (Fikir Kulübü)⁷² and was elected to its executive board within a short time.⁷³ He became one of the leading figures of the Federation of Idea Clubs (Fikir Klüpleri Federasyonu, FKF), the significant youth organization of the period.⁷⁴ Özel's commitment was also embodied in art; he was the poet behind the "Federation of Idea

⁶⁵ Ibid., 30-31.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 31-32.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 33.

⁶⁸ Özel, *Waldo*, 35.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 36-37.

⁷⁰ Tüzer, *İsmet Özel*, 39.

⁷¹ Özel, *Waldo*, 64.

⁷² Emerging in the 1950s, such clubs became, in the political-intellectual climate of the 1960s, the "first mass organization" of Türkiye's socialist youth. In 1965, the organization transformed into the Federation of Idea Clubs (FKF), which played a historic role in shaping subsequent leftist currents. The FKF's activist orientation was primarily driven by anti-imperialist mobilization. Protests against the U.S. Sixth Fleet and crises in foreign policy during the 1960s fueled student activism, which in turn triggered shifts within the FKF. By the fall of 1969, the FKF evolved into the Revolutionary Youth (Dev-Genç). For a detailed analysis, see Öztürk, Emine. "Fikir Kulüpleri Federasyonunda Türkiye İşçi Partisi – Millî Demokratik Devrim Hareketi Mücadelesi (1965-1969)." *Öneri Dergisi* 17, no. 57 (Ocak 2022): 386-416. <https://doi.org/10.14783/maruoneri.945830>.

⁷³ Tüzer, *İsmet Özel*, 40.

⁷⁴ Gün Zileli, *Yarılma* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2000), 201.

Clubs March" (Fikir Kulüpleri Federasyonu Marşı), whose lyrics galvanized the movement with verses like: "We lean our backs on the people, shouting 'Ha!' / We've joined this dance with the people at the forefront... / Fight for freedom, fight for the children."⁷⁵ In 1963, guided by Ataol Behramoğlu, he joined Workers' Party of Türkiye (Türkiye İşçi Partisi, TİP)⁷⁶ and described himself as a "registered communist" (*müseccel bir komünist*).⁷⁷ However, due to academic indifference, he dropped out of SBF and was unexpectedly drafted for military service in 1967.⁷⁸

When he returned from military service in 1969, he observed both a growing crowd and a shift within the socialist circles; individuals who had previously avoided taking responsibility were now among their most prominent figures.⁷⁹ Özel regarded it as ironic that he himself was accused of being an "opportunist," precisely because he had taken a stand during risky times. He characterizes this period as one marked by sharp hostility, distrust, and careerism within the left.⁸⁰ Then he came to the realization that a new chapter had begun in his life: "A new period of resistance began for me... there was truly no hope left in the addresses I had in my pocket"⁸¹ — an expression that echoes the title of his own 1972 poem, "*Kanla Kirlenmiş Evrak*" [*The Document Stained with Blood*].⁸²

In 1970, he launched the journal *Halkın Dostları* (Friends of the People), which was shut down after the March 12, 1971 military intervention.⁸³ His attempts to travel abroad failed.⁸⁴ In 1972, he enrolled in the French Language Department at Hacettepe University,⁸⁵

⁷⁵ Ibid., 232.

⁷⁶ Özel, *Waldo*, 42-43.

⁷⁷ Tüzer, *İsmet Özel*, 41.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 44-45.

⁷⁹ Özel, *Waldo*, 70.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid., 71-72.

⁸² İsmet Özel, "Kanla Kirlenmiş Evrak," *Erbain: Kırk Yılın Şiirleri* (İstanbul: Tam İstiklâl Yayıncılık Ortaklığı, 2019), 159.

⁸³ Tüzer, *İsmet Özel*, 47-49.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 50-51.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 53.

and in 1976, he married his classmate Necla, with whom he had four children.⁸⁶

In the aftermath of the March 12 period, Özel withdrew into a kind of solitude, distancing himself from his former social environment.⁸⁷ He narrates his conversion to Islam as the outcome of an introspective quest and frames it as a search for "the morality that makes creation possible."⁸⁸ He interpreted this transformation as a liberation from "being a modern man."⁸⁹ His poem "Amentü" [*Creed*], published in 1974 in Sezai Karakoç's journal *Diriliş* [*Resurrection*], marked the public announcement of this intellectual transformation.⁹⁰ After graduating in 1977, he wrote columns for Islamic newspapers such as *Yeni Devir*, *Millî Gazete*, and *Yeni Şafak*.⁹¹ Between 1981 and 1998, he worked as a lecturer of French at Mimar Sinan University and later taught poetry part-time at Istanbul Bilgi University.⁹²

In 2003, he ended his ties with the Islamist milieu. In his column "*Bir Zamanlar İsmet Özel Vardı*" [*Once There Was İsmet Özel*] published in *Millî Gazete*, he announced this rupture, writing: "I felt uneasy where you stood; I am going somewhere else."⁹³ Since 2007, he has continued his intellectual activities as honorary president of İMDER.

2.2. Intellectual Foundations in the 1960s

Understanding the intellectual transformation of İsmet Özel offers a crucial opportunity to analyze Türkiye's political and social ruptures in the 20th century. As Özel himself notes, "For those of us living in Türkiye, no human event has been as decisive as the political changes we have experienced,"⁹⁴ situating his personal journey within a collective reading

⁸⁶ Ibid., 57.

⁸⁷ Özel, *Waldo*, 80-81.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 82.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 86.

⁹⁰ "Amentü," *Diriliş*, no. 1-2 (Eylül-Ekim 1974): 32-35, cited in İbrahim Tüzer, *İsmet Özel: Şiire Damıtılmış Bir Hayat* (Ankara: Akçağ Yayınları, 2020), 56.

⁹¹ Tüzer, *İsmet Özel*, 57.

⁹² Ibid., 60-61.

⁹³ Ibid., 61.

⁹⁴ Özel, *Waldo*, 29.

of history. His childhood coincided with the turbulent transition from the single-party regime to multi-party politics. He described the transformation of the "Millî Şef" (National Chief) into a democratic figure as "a brazen shamelessness that could stun the mind,"⁹⁵ and pointed out that three social orientations emerged in post-war Türkiye: the elites loyal to single-party values, the nouveaux riches rising under Democrat Party (Demokrat Parti, DP), and the Muslim masses encountering political representation for the first time. According to him, what mattered to this populace was not "who would come to power, but who would leave it."⁹⁶ His remark, "I can recognize the distinct influences of these three orientations in my makeup,"⁹⁷ reflects the permeability among social classes in Türkiye of that period.

This social and political atmosphere deeply shaped Özel's intellectual formation. As Hüseyin Etil emphasizes, in his mental world "external conditions" were always more decisive than "internal ones."⁹⁸ The American hegemony and neo-colonial practices that took shape after World War II oriented his critical thought.⁹⁹ As Fikret Başkaya points out, American expansionism functioned not through direct colonialism but via a global domination strategy established through corporations.¹⁰⁰ Türkiye's rapid incorporation into this new order made the phenomenon of "colonialism" central to Özel's thought.¹⁰¹

The 1960s were not only a personal learning period for Özel but also a time when Türkiye was "stirred by new ideas." Existentialism, Marxism, and Surrealism were influential, and publication activity increased in this atmosphere.¹⁰² For Özel, however, the sense of freedom was nothing but a "myth." The doors that opened led to a leftist

⁹⁵ Ibid., 32.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 34.

⁹⁸ Hüseyin Etil, *İsmet Özel ve Partizan: Aynı Adamın Öyküsü* (İstanbul: Küre Yayınları, 2020), 101.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Fikret Başkaya, *Çığırından Çıkmuş Bir Dünya* (Ankara: Özgür Üniversite Yayınları, 2004), 256, cited in Hüseyin Etil, *İsmet Özel ve Partizan: Aynı Adamın Öyküsü* (İstanbul: Küre Yayınları, 2019), 102.

¹⁰¹ Etil, *İsmet Özel ve Partizan*, 101.

¹⁰² Özel, *Waldo*, 38.

understanding "untouched by the foundational stones of Western Enlightenment."¹⁰³ This critique targeted both the theoretical weaknesses of the Turkish left and its problematic relationship with the state. According to him, the fact that the left, on a "social-justice oriented but non-Marxist" line, was supported by a wing of the state demonstrated its inability to construct an authentic social base.¹⁰⁴

The unique relationship between the left and nationalism during this period is noteworthy. As Erkan Doğan draws attention, the left perceived itself as the continuation of the national liberation struggle.¹⁰⁵ This nationalism diverged from right-wing, racist conceptions, carrying instead a humanist, anti-imperialist, and progressive character.¹⁰⁶ Within this framework, Özel stated, "Socialism brought me patriotism. Marxism, on the other hand, provided me the ability to resist dogmatism."¹⁰⁷ Thus, the 1960s marked a period in which international socialist thought and local nationalist-anti-imperialist dynamics intersected in Özel's intellectual world.

Kemalism stood at the center of this intersection. As Doğan observes, "Kemalism was incorporated into socialism by highlighting its anti-imperialist and progressive aspects."¹⁰⁸ At the international level, this strategy was nourished by Lenin's thesis on oppressed nations, Stalin's concept of "socialism in one country," and the Third Worldist currents.¹⁰⁹ However, this nationalist-based socialist interpretation brought ideological and organizational divisions: while the TİP directly advocated socialism, the Yön circle of the National Democratic Revolution (Milli Demokratik Devrim, MDD) envisioned a preceding stage of national democratic revolution.¹¹⁰ These divergences accelerated organizational fragmentation and prevented the left from

¹⁰³ Ibid., 38-39.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 40.

¹⁰⁵ Erkan Doğan, "Türk Solunun Kısa Tarihi: Sosyalizmi Milliyetçiliğe Eklemlenmek," *Doğu-Batı Düşünce Dergisi* 15, sayı 59 (Kış 2011-2012): 141.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 147.

¹⁰⁷ Özel, *Waldo*, 72.

¹⁰⁸ Doğan, *Türk Solunun Kısa Tarihi*, 136.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 137-139.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 142.

becoming a lasting social force.¹¹¹ Fikret Başkaya explains the structural causes of this failure through dependence on Kemalism, inability to build ties with the working class, and a developmentalist conception of socialism. According to him, the "statist" character of the left weakened its capacity to criticize the official ideology from the outset.¹¹² Etil also defines the main motivations of the leftist movement of the period as "national independence" and "anti-imperialism."¹¹³ The class-rootlessness and nationalist dependence that became evident in Özel's socialist experience correspond with these evaluations.

As Özel emphasized, socialism in Türkiye did not arise from deep-rooted class affiliations as in the West but remained dependent on individual preferences: "A socialist could not find a place within any class or family."¹¹⁴ This impasse led socialists to rely on Kemalism: "A socialist could only show strength through actions built upon the achievements of Kemalism."¹¹⁵ According to Özel, the main reason socialism spread in the 1960s was nationalism: "Although we called it socialism... the fundamental tendencies of the youth were patriotic, localist, and increasingly nationalist in character."¹¹⁶ Yet the debate over how socialism was to be constructed was shaped not only around ideology but also methods. One wing advocated a top-down transformation through military interventions, while the other emphasized a democratic struggle based on popular support. Özel clearly preferred the democratic method and prioritized "the quality of people responsible for putting theory into practice."¹¹⁷ This orientation was evident even before he joined the TİP.

Observing that the movement was not homogeneous, Özel highlighted the tense coexistence of "old guard" revolutionaries, top-down Jacobin-like figures around Republican People's Party

¹¹¹ Ibid., 153.

¹¹² Fikret Başkaya, "Türkiye Soluna Soldan Bakmak," *Doğu-Batı Düşünce Dergisi* 15, no. 59 (Kış 2011-2012): 159-162.

¹¹³ Etil, *İsmet Özel ve Partizan*, 157.

¹¹⁴ Özel, *Waldo*, 68.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 69.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 41.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 47-48.

(Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi, CHP), and younger socialist generations.¹¹⁸ For him, the conflicts within TİP reflected the structural tension between democratic politics and authoritarian tendencies.¹¹⁹ Similarly, his critique of student movements was connected to this concern: he found it "dangerous" that students had detached themselves from the institutional framework of politics and had become decisive actors, arguing that real transformation was possible only through political parties.¹²⁰

Within the ideological debates of TİP, İsmet Özel embraced Mehmet Ali Aybar's concept of a "socialism specific to Türkiye." He grounds this preference in the strategic differences between Fidel Castro and Che Guevara, two central figures of the Cuban Revolution. Özel's preference for Castro is directly tied to his emphasis on concrete social construction over Guevara's revolutionary romanticism.¹²¹ This distinction is consistent with academic analyses that portray Castro as prioritizing pragmatic survival through close ties with the Soviet Union, in contrast to Guevara's commitment to exporting revolutions along a Chinese-inspired model.¹²²

However, the invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968 and the March 12, 1971 memorandum shook Özel's ties with socialism. In this process, when the socialist movement's conception of the state as "guarantor" collapsed, Özel criticized Turkish intellectuals' connection with the status quo.¹²³ While criticizing the profile of those who could "abandon many of the things they had labored for," he included himself in this self-questioning: "Apparently, I was one of them too. Was there a way to avoid being such a person?"¹²⁴ Thus, he argued that socialism in Türkiye was not a permanent project of transformation but rather a "temporary enthusiasm" lacking structural grounding.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 54.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 55.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 61.

¹²¹ Ibid., 52.

¹²² C.E. Ramirez and P. Suedfeld, "Nonimmediacy Scoring of Archival Materials: The Relationship Between Fidel Castro and Che Guevara," *Political Psychology* 9, no. 1 (Mar 1988): 157-158. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3791322>.

¹²³ Özel, *Waldo*, 69-70.

¹²⁴ Ibid., 70.

This observation overlapped with Başkaya's critiques of ideological dependence and class-rootlessness as well as with Etil's emphasis on nationalist discourse. Another interpretation Özel offered during his TİP experience was his Islamic monotheist reading of the party's slogan, "Enough of being slaves to men" ("*Kula kulluk yetsin artık*").¹²⁵ According to him, while the slogan carried an ostensibly socialist rhetoric, it in fact appealed to the collective subconscious of the Turkish people with its meaning of "rejecting all human authorities and submitting only to the divine will." Linking TİP's electoral success in 1965 to this ontological call, Özel attributed its subsequent decline to the CHP's monopolization of leftist politics through its "left of center" discourse and to the inward calculations of leftists acting out of fear that "the nation would take matters into its own hands."¹²⁶ This interpretation marked a threshold in his transition from socialism to Islam.

The 1960s were also a period in which Islamic thought in Türkiye was reshaped. As Asım Öz has shown, the Islamic press of the period constituted a significant example in the evolution of Islamism. Öz points out that between 1960 and 1970, the term "Islamism" was not widely used; instead, the expression "nationalist-religious conservative" (*milliyetçi-mukaddesatçı*) was preferred, and the word "Islamism" was even considered "artificial" and "meaningless."¹²⁷ This conceptual fluidity makes it difficult to speak of an "authentic Islamism" for the 1960s. Nonetheless, the Islamic discourse of the period was closely tied to nationalism; Said Ramadan's article criticizing nationalism as a deviation placing itself above the love of God and the discussions on "national economy" in Hareket journal reveal different aspects of this search.¹²⁸

¹²⁵ İsmet Özel, *Bir Akşam Gezintisi Değil Bir İstiklâl Yürüyüşü* (İstanbul: Tam İstiklâl Yayıncılık Ortaklığı, 2018), 58.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Asım Öz, "Manevi İmar ile İslam İnkılabı Arasında: Altmışlı Yıllarda İslam Davası Etrafındaki Vaziyet Alışlar Üzerine," in *Türkiye'nin 1960'lı Yılları*, ed. Mete Kaan Kaynar and Tanıl Bora (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2017), 593.

¹²⁸ Ibid., 596.

As Aybars Yanık and Tanıl Bora emphasize, the 1960s were not only marked by the rise of the left but also by the awakening of Islamism, the birth of the nationalist-idealist (*ülküçü*) ideology, and the development of Kurdish political consciousness. The Yön-Devrim movement, debates on the Asiatic Mode of Production, TİP, and the MDD axis shaped different leftist strategies,¹²⁹ while Necip Fazıl and Nurettin Topçu became reference figures of Islamic thought.¹³⁰ The Hilal circle provided an intellectual ground for radical Islamism by translating works of figures such as Sayyid Qutb and Abul A'la Maududi.¹³¹ This plurality made 1960s Türkiye a unique laboratory in the history of political thought.

Tanıl Bora's analysis sheds light on the intricate relationship socialist movements of the period established with nationalism. According to Bora, although a reflex of distance toward nationalism dominated among socialists, the anti-imperialist discourse functioned as a bridge between official nationalism and socialist rhetoric. Particularly, the "proletarian nation" thesis regarded national liberation struggles as the engine of world revolution, while pushing the class-based and ethno-cultural contradictions within the nation into the background. This created ground for legitimizing chauvinistic tendencies within the left.¹³²

In conclusion, 1960s Türkiye constituted a turning point in İsmet Özel's intellectual journey. The left's dependence on Kemalism, its class-rootlessness, and its statist character led him to conclude that socialism could not offer a genuine possibility for social transformation in Türkiye. At the same time, as Islamic thought evolved from a nationalist-religious conservative discourse toward a more radical trajectory, Özel's experience in TİP allowed him to reinterpret socialist rhetoric through an Islamic monotheist lens. His turn from socialism to Islam was thus not

¹²⁹ Aybars Yanık and Tanıl Bora, "Manevi İmar ile İslam İnkılabı Arasında: Altmışlı Yıllarda İslam Davası Etrafındaki Vaziyet Alışlar Üzerine," in *Türkiye'nin 1960'lı Yılları*, ed. Mete Kaan Kaynar and Tanıl Bora (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2017), 275-289.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 293-294.

¹³¹ Ibid., 294-295.

¹³² Tanıl Bora, "Milliyetçiliğin Tekinsizliğini Unutmamak," in *Sosyalizmin Milliyetçilikle İmtihani*, ed. Ferhan Umruk (İstanbul: Praxis Kitaplığı, 2007), 1-7.

only a personal rupture but also a historical process shaped by the ideological diversity and structural impasses of the 1960s.

2.3. Islamic Challenge to Modernity

The works of İsmet Özel present a comprehensive critical system that radically interrogates the fundamental institutions and concepts of the modern world from an Islamic perspective. His thought, through its analyses of civilization, technology, capitalism, and Western civilization – which combine theological, philosophical, and socio-political dimensions – transforms into a discourse of resistance that rejects modernity in its entirety and positions Islam as the sole authentic alternative.

Özel's central thesis is that the modern world order is not merely an economic or political system but rather possesses the character of a "false religion" (*batıl bir din*). According to him, there exists an identity between the "world system and the system of unbelief (*küfür sistemi*)" such that "one can easily be used to express the other."¹³³ Although this system operates through mechanisms of material production and consumption, its true power derives from the "spiritual veil it casts over people" (*insanlar üzerine saldıgı manevi örtü*), that is, from its own system of beliefs and values.¹³⁴ Consequently, all systems of thought outside of Islam either align with this false system or have lost their original dynamism. Islam alone contains the possibility of authentic resistance against this system.¹³⁵ Özel attaches great importance to the construction of the Muslim personality, which will form the foundation of this resistance. According to him, "Although the Muslim is obliged to maintain an extremely active, interested, and interventionist attitude towards the age, he must possess a mental structure outside the logical fabric of the age." The Muslim must take his own principles as a basis and reshape the conditions of the age according to these principles. "In this

¹³³ İsmet Özel, *Cuma Mektupları-I*, (İstanbul: Tam İstiklâl Yayıncılık Ortaklığı, 2018), 54-55.

¹³⁴ Ibid., 55.

¹³⁵ Ibid., 57.

state, he will remain 'alien' to the demands of the age."¹³⁶ This is, in the meaning defined by Özel, a conscious "alienation."

The greatest obstacle to this resistance is what İsmet Özel diagnoses as a "mental illness": the despondency of Muslims in the face of the West's technical supremacy. This despondency leads to the attempt to adopt technology by abstracting it from its moral and intellectual context; however, Özel argues this is impossible.¹³⁷ This impossibility is evident in the evolution of technique: initially replacing muscle power, it has advanced with computer technology and now aims to "replace human brain power."¹³⁸ Consequently, science in the modern age has lost its liberating character, becoming a "superstitious and speculative instrument of pressure" that has rendered the world amenable to the rule of a central power.¹³⁹ This transformation occurred because contemporary science and technology developed within the specific historical-social conditions of the West, "in line with the interests of the bourgeoisie,"¹⁴⁰ and emerged from a class-based foundation antithetical to Islam¹⁴¹. Thus, it has become the "ideological tool of a technocratic, bureaucratic, and elitist civilization"¹⁴². Therefore, Özel concludes that "to hope that Islamic values can unite and coexist with the scientific and technical mindset of our age is mere consolation (*avuntu*),"¹⁴³ as the West's belief, philosophy, science, and technology form an inseparable whole that "must be accepted or rejected in their totality."¹⁴⁴

Özel's critique of Western civilization deepens with his use of the Faust allegory. The character of Faust from Goethe's work is an alchemist who sells his soul to the devil for infinite knowledge and power. Yet the end of this dark pact is tragic: Faust is found with his lifeless body in a desolate inn. In popular narratives, this death is believed to be the work

¹³⁶ İsmet Özel, *Üç Zor Mesele*, 10th ed. (İstanbul: Tam İstiklâl Yayıncılık Ortaklığı, 2020), 115.

¹³⁷ Ibid., 95.

¹³⁸ Ibid., 361.

¹³⁹ Ibid., 504.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 359.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 95.

¹⁴² Ibid., 498.

¹⁴³ Ibid., 95.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 96.

of the devil, thus turning the story into an allegorical warning about the dangers of the human desire to overstep its limits.¹⁴⁵ This tragic end is a symbol of Western civilization's "sacrifice of spiritual values (the soul) for material gains (power)." For Özel, capitalism is the manifestation of this Faustian pact transformed into a world system under the name of "Western Civilization." In Özel's allegory, Islam is the only potential domain that rejects the Faustian pact: this is the danger that capitalism conceals as the "green peril" (Islam) and sees as its true enemy.¹⁴⁶

On a philosophical level, Özel offers a radical critique of Cartesian dualism – specifically the foundational distinction between the thinking subject (*res cogitans*) and extended matter/object (*res extensa*). This subject-object dichotomy, which lies at the heart of Western thought, has caused humans to lose their sense of integrity with the cosmos and assume a "norm-setting" (*ölçü koyucu*) position aimed at dominating nature.¹⁴⁷ This project of domination relies on an understanding of the average, used for social control, which renders the individual insignificant. Özel states that in this instrumentalized and standardized world of the modern individual, people "strive to form an existence in masses" and responsibility is concentrated in an "average understanding."¹⁴⁸ In this context, it is inevitable for Muslims to remain "off-side" in the modern world.¹⁴⁹ The duty of the Muslim is to remain and resist as an individual with "personality" without dissolving within this mass.

Özel's analysis of capitalism is shaped through his concept of the "World System." Capitalism is the "order that functions due to accumulated and concentrated capital."¹⁵⁰ This order renders human relationships into a quality "convertible into money" (*paraya tahvil edilebilen*), leaving social determinacy in the hands of capital.¹⁵¹ The

¹⁴⁵ Sevim Güldürmez, "Faust'u Gölgesinden Seyretmek Yahut Modernizm Bağlamında Faust'a Dair Bazı Dikkatler," *Turkish Studies* 12, no. 14 (2017): 324-343, <http://dx.doi.org/10.7827/TurkishStudies.11647>.

¹⁴⁶ Özel, *Waldo*, 221.

¹⁴⁷ Özel, *Üç Zor Mesele*, 319-321.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 550.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 551.

¹⁵⁰ Özel, *Waldo*, 162.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 163.

domination of capital is not only an economic superiority but also the fact that "earning more is considered a virtue and the profit-maximizing mechanism occupies a central place in human relations."¹⁵²

The legitimacy of this system is constructed through a historical narrative that claims to leave no alternatives. Özel sees this narrative as an instrument of "epistemic violence."¹⁵³ The Cold War period is, for him, a "scandal" and a great "deception."¹⁵⁴ During this period, the capacity of the USSR was exaggerated to construct its "superpower" image, while the US globalized its own lifestyle by "attributing innocence to consumer culture."¹⁵⁵ The collapse of the Soviets was presented as the "defeat of communism," whereas, according to Özel, the Soviet order had long been integrated into the capitalist world system. The discourse of liberalism's victory is therefore nothing but "sleight of hand" (*bir el çabukluğu*).¹⁵⁶

Özel also draws attention to the misleading role Marxism played in this process. He considers Marxism's view of the bourgeoisie as a revolutionary class and its belief that the social order can only be established through the struggle of those at the bottom to be a fundamental fallacy.¹⁵⁷ According to him, this approach has created a world where "capital is used recklessly while victimhood is also considered a value." He argues that the real dynamics of transformation in Europe originated from the efforts of groups who did not want to lose their status, and that it arose from this dynamism, not from an insurrection of misery.¹⁵⁸

In Özel's historical analysis, the Ottoman factor plays a central role in the establishment of capitalism. Between the 14th and 16th centuries, Ottoman conquests severed Europe from traditional trade networks, paving the way for alternative models of capital accumulation to emerge in Italian city-states. Ottoman military pressure forced Europeans to

¹⁵² Özel, *Cuma Mektupları-I*, 237.

¹⁵³ Özel, *Waldo*, 156.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 127.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 129.

¹⁵⁶ Özel, *Cuma Mektupları-I*, 603-604.

¹⁵⁷ İsmet Özel, *Cuma Mektupları-II* (İstanbul: Tam İstiklâl Yayıncılık Ortaklığı, 2018), 70-72.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 159.

develop new economic mechanisms out of "necessity" (*zaruret*).¹⁵⁹ The prerequisite for capitalism's ability to establish global hegemony was the breaking of Ottoman naval power after Lepanto (1571).¹⁶⁰ Özel interprets the development of capitalism through the "diminishment of Turkish power."¹⁶¹ Özel's Ottoman-centered analysis of the birth of capitalism overlaps with and complements Immanuel Wallerstein's world-systems analysis.¹⁶² Wallerstein's concept of a 'world-economy'¹⁶³ corresponds to the structure Özel calls the "World System," where capitalism first sprouted in the Italian city-states. Furthermore, Özel's emphasis on the "hierarchical structure of the world system" and the "value transfer mechanism"¹⁶⁴ directly overlaps with Wallerstein's concepts of "*unequal exchange*" and "*surplus-value*" transfer.¹⁶⁵ Both thinkers agree that the capitalist system operates for the benefit of a minority in the core and is based on the exploitation of the periphery.

Today, this system operates centered on the United States. Because the US was the "only true victor" of the Second World War, it seized the political and economic advantages of the order but also became obliged to act as its guardian.¹⁶⁶ The system is a hierarchical mechanism operating between core (North America), semi-periphery (Western Europe, Japan), and periphery countries. The flow of capital and value is from the periphery to the core, and the command is: "If you want to live, operate the system."¹⁶⁷

According to Özel, attempts to develop "counter-hegemony" against this operation (Nazi Germany, Fascist Italy, the Soviet Union, Japan) failed because they all reproduced the logic of capitalism.¹⁶⁸ Therefore, the issue is not to produce a new hegemony but to "reject the race itself"

¹⁵⁹ Özel, *Waldo*, 175.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., 176.

¹⁶¹ Ibid., 174-177.

¹⁶² Immanuel Wallerstein, *World-Systems Analysis: An Introduction* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 21.

¹⁶³ Ibid., 21.

¹⁶⁴ Özel, *Cuma Mektupları-I*, 486-487.

¹⁶⁵ Wallerstein, *World-Systems Analysis*, 28.

¹⁶⁶ Özel, *Cuma Mektupları-I*, 176-177.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., 486-487.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., 371.

(*yarışın kendisini reddetmek*). The liberating proposal that can replace this rejection can only come from Islam.¹⁶⁹ This is because Islam is "not indebted for any element of its existence to the world order, to the functioning of this system, or to its development throughout history."¹⁷⁰ Türkiye, due to its Ottoman heritage, its history of never having been an "open colony," and the continued central place of Islam in its social fabric, possesses a unique potential to construct this alternative.¹⁷¹

In conclusion, İsmet Özel's thought presents a comprehensive critique that rejects the modern world system in its totality – encompassing its technological, economic, philosophical, and theological dimensions – and posits Islamic resistance as the only authentic alternative. His analysis systematically exposes the instrumental rationality and mechanisms of domination inherent in modernity, while assigning Muslims the critical task of constructing an autonomous material foundation and distinct way of life. This project necessitates not merely socioeconomic or political transformation but a fundamental epistemological break and the maintenance of what Özel terms "intransigence" (*uzlaşmazlığı koruma*).¹⁷² This call finds its ultimate articulation in Özel's trench metaphor, which demands that Muslims overcome their fragmentation and unite in a cohesive front dedicated to defending truth. This unity, as articulated in Özel's metaphor, must consciously encompass those who recognize the system's oppression, whether Muslim or not yet Muslim but oppressed, organized around a stance against tyranny. The sobering observation that "there are Muslims on both sides of the trench"¹⁷³ underscores the imperative of this solidarity, representing the practical manifestation of Islam's universal claim to justice within the modern condition.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., 370-371.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., 59.

¹⁷¹ Ibid., 373.

¹⁷² Ibid., 617.

¹⁷³ Ibid., 12.

2.4. From Theory to Institution

İsmet Özel, who began his active political life within the socialist movement of the 1960s, put it on hold in the mid-1970s. He later adopted an Islamist worldview and for years wrote newspaper columns, through which he developed his analyses of the world system and his critique of capitalism. After discontinuing his column in 2003, he founded İMDER in 2007 and continued his intellectual and political activities under this umbrella. This section examines whether İMDER aspires to transform Özel's theoretical vision into a "political project." For a formation to be considered a political project, it is expected to present an alternative vision of power to the existing political order, possess a concrete program for social transformation, and propose a strategy and organizational model to achieve these goals. This section explores the possibility of evaluating İMDER as a political project based on these criteria.

Özel interprets İMDER as an essential consequence of the "need to be a *millet* (nation)" in Türkiye. According to him, there is a mass in society that feels this need but is politically unrepresented.¹⁷⁴ In this context, the association aims both to fill a void and to be a cadre movement for the reconstruction of "Turkish independence." In Özel's words, İMDER is the institutionalized form of a tendency that exists in Türkiye but has "no leader, ideology, or owner."¹⁷⁵ With an ideological foundation based on the "Truth-Falsehood" (*Hak-Batıl*) dichotomy, the association accepts İstiklâl Marşı as a manifesto on both textual and metaphysical levels. Özel clearly states this opposition by saying, "Whose right was independence? The right of those who worship Truth (*Hak*)... Not those who worship Falsehood (*Batıl*)."¹⁷⁶ According to Özel, the Anthem functions as an "ideology" that declares Turkish existence can only be sustained through Islamic values, and for Özel, as the Anthem declares, the relevance of the line "That single-fanged monster, 'Civilisation!' as you call it?"

¹⁷⁴ İsmet Özel, *Bir Akşam Gezintisi Değil Bir İstiklâl Yürüyüşü*, 2nd ed. (İstanbul: Tam İstiklâl Yayıncılık Ortaklığı, 2018), 333.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., 333.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., 472.

("Medeniyet dediğin tek dişi kalmış canavar") still persists today.¹⁷⁷ In this vein, Özel first introduced the notion of the Anthem as a *milli mutabakat metni* (the national consensus document),¹⁷⁸ a characterization later echoed and further elaborated in the pages of *Çelimli Çalım*.¹⁷⁹ ¹⁸⁰ This framing underscores its role as the only legitimate ground of political and social unity in Türkiye.

Özel's understanding of Turkishness is not ethnic but based on historical and religious foundations. Turkishness is an identity shaped by pushing back the non-Muslim world in the geography of Anatolia.¹⁸¹ According to him, being Turkish is possible not through lineage or cultural characteristics but rather with "the consciousness of undertaking the honorable representation of Islam in these lands."¹⁸² This identity carries an inseparable integrity with the borders of *Misak-ı Milli* (the National Pact) and the homeland, understood as a "religious matter."¹⁸³ This approach reveals that separating Turkishness and Islam is meaningless. Indeed, Özel states, "If Turkishness is anything other than bearing the standard of Islam, it is not worth mentioning."¹⁸⁴ The concept of "standard-bearing" (*bayraktarlık*) here elevates Turkishness from a mere ethnic identity to the subject of an active historical mission that protects, carries, and exalts Islam. Therefore, the concept of Turkishness carries a meaning that includes Islam and, combined with Özel's anti-capitalist stance, gains a historical integrity.

Within this integrity, Turkishness signifies an ontological incompatibility with the capitalist Western world system. Özel argues, "Every pro-Turkish stance gain meaning only by making its total incompatibility with capitalism evident,"¹⁸⁵ defending that Turkishness is an anti-imperialist identity. Consequently, his *milliyetçilik* is of a

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., 54.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., 179.

¹⁷⁹ Enes Aksu, "Bizim Yazımız," *Çelimli Çalım*, no. 7 (Ocak 2015): 14.

¹⁸⁰ Faysal Torak, "Vav'lı Türk'ün Kuyruğuna Yapışanlar," *Çelimli Çalım*, no: 18 (Aralık 2015): 8.

¹⁸¹ Özel, *İstiklâl Yürüyüşü*, 153.

¹⁸² Ibid., 152-153.

¹⁸³ Ibid., 44-45.

¹⁸⁴ İsmet Özel, *Cuma Mektupları-II* (İstanbul: Tam İstiklâl Yayıncılık Ortaklığı, 2018), 132.

¹⁸⁵ Özel, *Cuma Mektupları-II*, 132.

quality that is "heavy in weight and value" and "irreconcilable with average ethnicism";¹⁸⁶ it signifies not an ethnic superiority claim but a historical mission and a systemic rejection. Özel notes that while the independence consciousness and resistance developed by the people of Türkiye under Western domination were preserved with the contribution of Islam, this is often unspoken.¹⁸⁷ Therefore, the emphasis on Turkishness is not about excluding religion but rather foregrounding the historical identity that carries Islam as a more functional discourse.

Membership in İMDER is not a passive belonging; it is an active stance that is moral, intellectual, and even willing to pay a price. Özel describes members as people "who are pleased with and accept each other."¹⁸⁸ This is a relationship of trust and surety based on the principle of "first the comrade, then the path."¹⁸⁹ The association is not a club but a shared "independence march"; the essential matter here is members trusting each other enough to vouch for one another.¹⁹⁰ One of the primary responsibilities expected from members is to oppose the understanding, widespread in Türkiye, that "sees moving away from Islam as progress." However, this is not about forcing ideas but about enabling individuals to question their own values and Türkiye's existential ties.¹⁹¹ Membership also entails a determination "not to get dirty,"¹⁹² the will "not to be a traitor to the homeland,"¹⁹³ and a consciousness of "nobility." This nobility signifies the awareness of being part of a history chain centered on Islam since the 13th century, never doing anything "by proxy," and a clear stance against the world order.¹⁹⁴ The association's goal is not "to prevent the corruption in the world" but "to avoid being a part of it."¹⁹⁵ İMDER has also institutionalized a fundamental tension in İsmet Özel's thought: on one hand, the claim of being an intellectual

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., 37.

¹⁸⁷ İsmet Özel, *Cuma Mektupları-I* (İstanbul: Tam İstiklâl Yayıncılık Ortaklığı, 2018), 45.

¹⁸⁸ Özel, *İstiklâl Yürüyüşü*, 37.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., 38.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., 102.

¹⁹¹ Ibid., 555.

¹⁹² Ibid., 103.

¹⁹³ Ibid., 117.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., 494-495.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., 103.

movement that refuses integration into the system, prioritizes moral purity, and aims to raise "unusable people"; on the other hand, the desire to be a political project that aims to directly intervene in Türkiye's destiny, implying a claim to power. The association's quality as a political project must be sought in the dialectic between these two poles.

İMDER's primary political goal is to stand against the global capitalist system and defend Türkiye's *millî-manevî* (national-spiritual) independence. Özel explains the birth of capitalism neither through Marx's economic nor Weber's sociological explanations; according to him, capitalism is the product of a historical process from which the Turks were excluded.¹⁹⁶ The association members should be people who are aware of these truths and have "consciousness" about how things work. The demise of capitalism will not arise from its internal contradictions as Marxists claim;¹⁹⁷ the center of these possibilities will be Turkish lands.¹⁹⁸ However, the Republican era is one of "squandered possibilities"; during this period, "a segment" destroyed traditional values like contentment and being satisfied with little, deeming them reasons for "backwardness," and instead wanted the nation to be "greedy, ambitious, avaricious, and covetous." In this context, Özel draws attention to İstiklâl Marşı, the "mainstay of the *millet's* existence," to regain these squandered possibilities.¹⁹⁹ The issues Özel highlighted in his writings in the 1990s are also an indication that İMDER had begun to take shape in his mind years earlier as a conception.

This intellectual foundation also places İMDER in a distinct position in the political field. Özel characterizes democracy as "some secret and open agreements made among certain ringleaders."²⁰⁰ According to him, a political party has two main goals: to seize power and to be effective in determining the direction of the country's governance. He believes these two features should not be separated; even if a political party cannot come to power, it should make its presence felt in governance.²⁰¹

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., 227-228.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid., 231.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., 238.

¹⁹⁹ Özel, *Cuma Mektupları-II*, 151.

²⁰⁰ Özel, *İstiklâl Yürüyüşü*, 498.

²⁰¹ Özel, *Cuma Mektupları-I*, 333.

According to him, the real division in Türkiye is not right-left; it is "the attitude adopted towards the world system."²⁰² Özel emphasizes that politics in Türkiye cannot stand without touching Islam; "stroking the settled feelings of the people," "appearing Muslim" are prerequisites for doing politics in Türkiye. Because in people's consciousness, the thought "if they are not Muslim, they are not from us" has taken root one way or another.²⁰³ In this context, İMDER argues that the US is behind "Political Islam" and that Muslims are pacified through "Islamic-appearing channels."²⁰⁴ By declaring that İMDER is not a byproduct of any "Islamic activity," Özel distinguishes its position from that of "political Islam."²⁰⁵

Even though he criticizes political parties, political struggle and political parties are important for Özel. Because if these parties are not like "the parties of totalitarian regimes" or "the faceless mass parties of classical democracies," they increase "political maturity" in society.²⁰⁶ For Özel, "Political maturity means individuals having knowledge and consciousness about what they want, why, and how." According to Özel, a party with the desired structure will be able to show the truth and make its inevitability accepted to the extent that it ensures the harmony of people bearing the same responsibility from its smallest unit to its highest boards, coordinates them, and succeeds in spreading this unity wave upon wave throughout the country.²⁰⁷ Crucially, Özel sees this internal political maturity as fundamentally incompatible with the compromises offered by the global system. In Türkiye, problems such as increasing income inequality and rising luxury consumption are the "suppuration" (*cerahat*) of the main issue: "the demands of Muslims to reconcile with the global system."²⁰⁸ According to Özel, the political struggle of Muslims should be based on "non-reconciliation with the global system."

²⁰² Ibid., 112.

²⁰³ Ibid., 354.

²⁰⁴ Özel, *İstiklâl Yürüyüşü*, 500.

²⁰⁵ Ibid., 496.

²⁰⁶ Özel, *Cuma Mektupları-I*, 89.

²⁰⁷ Ibid.

²⁰⁸ Ibid., 16.

The association's publication, *Çelimli Çalım*, which will be evaluated in the next section of the study, defines İstiklâl Marşı as a "program" and frequently brings up the discourse, "The constitution does not come out of İstiklâl Marşı; the constitution comes out of İstiklâl Marşı."²⁰⁹ ²¹⁰ This interpretation resonates with Özel's earlier formulation in *İstiklâl Yürüyüşü*, where he defined the Anthem as a *milli mutabakat metni*, a notion that *Çelimli Çalım* repeatedly echoed and employed in its ideological positioning. İMDER is not limited to intellectual production; it also clearly expresses its desire to exist in the political field. The attempt to field a candidate for the Metropolitan Municipality of Konya and the principle of "we will not enter an election we will lose"²¹¹ demonstrate strategic preparation. While the Konya example reveals the association's intention to be a political actor at least at the local level, the "we won't run if we'll lose" principle indicates that this intention points to a strategy that acts on its own terms and only if the probability of winning is high, rather than a traditional political struggle. This situation aligns with the tendency to position İMDER as an elite "vanguard cadre" movement rather than a mass political party. The statement, "If İstiklâl Marşı Derneği one day emerges as a political party, it will mean it is on the eve of coming to power," reveals the association as an actor aiming for the center.²¹² Therefore, the views expressed in *Çelimli Çalım* can be evaluated as the intellectual background of a potential political program.

²⁰⁹ "Çelimli Çalım: Kimin Çalımı Kime?" panel konuşmalarından alıntılar, *Çelimli Çalım*, no. 5 (Ekim 2014): arka kapak.

²¹⁰ Durmuş Küçükşakalak, "Yamayasa," *Çelimli Çalım*, no. 9 (Mart 2015): 2.

²¹¹ İsmet Özel, "Bir Milletin Ümidi Yoksa Kendisi de Yoktur," *Çelimli Çalım*, no. 6 (Aralık 2014): 20.

²¹² Ibid., 21.

Ideological Foundations of İMDER

3.1 Historical and Political Context in 2000s

The establishment of İMDER in 2007, under the leadership of the poet and thinker İsmet Özel, should be read as an ideological response emerging at the intersection of global and local crises of the 2000s. The association emerged within a historical context shaped by the transformed international security paradigm of the post-Cold War era, the identity-based tensions created by Türkiye's neoliberal transformation and EU harmonization process, and ultimately, the constitutional crisis that peaked in 2007. This session of study aims to analyze İMDER not merely as a cultural association but as an ideological and potential political movement that claims to construct a conservative-revolutionary alternative, centered around İstiklâl Marşı, against the hegemonic modernization paradigm.

3.1.1 Global Order after 9/11

The September 11, 2001 attacks fundamentally altered the international security paradigm of the post-Cold War era. Barry Buzan states that these attacks "solved the problem of threat deficiency for the US" and

reshaped global security policies.²¹³ US President George W. Bush's "axis of evil" rhetoric and the invasion of Iraq led to deep divisions within the international community, while also triggering NATO's Article 5 for the first time in its history.²¹⁴

Fuat Keyman characterizes this process as a "revival of military power-oriented hegemony" and emphasizes the increase in uncertainty, insecurity, and risk perception within the international system.²¹⁵ September 11, which unexpectedly ended the post-Cold War era, solved the "problem of threat deficiency" for the US.²¹⁶ During this period, the US developed a discourse positioning itself as the "custodian of humanity's future"; Bush's declaration that "we will rid the world of evil-doers" was a manifestation of this hegemonic vision.²¹⁷ NATO invoked Article 5 for the first time, which was accepted by Japan, Russia, China, and India.²¹⁸ Although the US-led "war on terror" discourse was partially adopted by NATO and other major powers, actions such as the Iraq invasion caused deep rifts within the international community.²¹⁹

Özgür Dönmez argues that the tension between Islam and the West has deepened through modernization processes and that 9/11 carried this conflict onto a global scale. According to him, the dynamic of "creative destruction" underlying Western modernity has led to a profound identity crisis in the Islamic world.²²⁰ The imposition of modernization on non-Western societies has produced not only cultural alienation but also new forms of political dependency. Dönmez defines this process as "the difficulty of Islamic societies in reproducing their own historical references."²²¹

²¹³ Barry Buzan, "The Changing Agenda of Military Security," *Uluslararası İlişkiler* 5, no. 18 (Haziran 2008): 118-119. <https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/pub/uidergisi/issue/39260/462355>.

²¹⁴ Ibid., 119-120.

²¹⁵ E. Fuat Keyman, "Globalization, International Relations and Hegemony," *Uluslararası İlişkiler* 3, no. 9 (Mart 2006): 9-10. <https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/pub/uidergisi/issue/39250/462216>.

²¹⁶ Buzan, "Changing Agenda," 119.

²¹⁷ Ibid., 119.

²¹⁸ Ibid., 119-120.

²¹⁹ Ibid., 120-121.

²²⁰ Rasim Özgür Dönmez, "Küreselleşme, Batı Modernliği ve Şiddet: Batı'ya Karşı Siyasal İslam," *Uluslararası İlişkiler* 1, no. 4 (Kış 2004): 87. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43926374>.

²²¹ Ibid., 100.

In this context, he points out that paradoxical policies – such as the U.S. support for Afghan mujahideen during the Cold War – prepared the ground for the emergence of radical organizations within the global system itself. The rise of al-Qaeda is regarded as the most visible outcome of these contradictory policies.²²² For Dönmez, the claim of modernization as a one-dimensional path of progress in fact generates new forms of dependency and conflict; the 9/11 attacks thus constituted a symbolic threshold, making the opposition between the West and the Islamic world visible on a global scale.²²³ According to Emre Doğan, the situation also manifested itself in Türkiye with the bomb attacks on a synagogue and the British Consulate in Istanbul in 2003.²²⁴

3.1.2 EU Reforms and Neoliberal Change

AKP which came to power in 2002, accelerated neoliberal reforms in line with pressure from the IMF and the EU.²²⁵ Merih Angın and Pınar Bedirhanoglu emphasize that the large-scale privatizations carried out during the AKP period were used as a means of not only economic but also political "proving of maturity" in Türkiye's neoliberal transformation process.²²⁶ This process, which proceeded through the block sales of Türk Telekom (2005), TÜPRAŞ (2006), ERDEMİR (2005), and PETKİM (although its first tender was held in 2003, it was only sold after the third tender, which took place in 2007) became an indicator of the AKP's efforts both to reassure international capital and to institutionalize the neoliberal understanding of the state domestically.²²⁷ These privatizations led to the state acquiring a "merchant" identity and the commodification of public assets in international markets, while also deepening capital's domination over the state.²²⁸ Particularly, the

²²² Ibid., 100-101.

²²³ Ibid., 101.

²²⁴ Emre Doğan, "Türkiye'de Asker-Siyaset İlişkisi; 28 Şubat 1997 ve 27 Nisan 2007 Süreçleri," (Master's thesis, Adnan Menderes University, 2020), 274.

²²⁵ Merih Angın and Pınar Bedirhanoglu, "AKP Döneminde Türkiye'de Büyük Ölçekli Özelleştirmeler ve Devletin Dönüşümü," *Praksis*, no: 30-31 (2013): 83. <https://124.im/H6Ny>.

²²⁶ Ibid.

²²⁷ Ibid., 76-77.

²²⁸ Ibid., 88-89.

presentation of these sales as "successes" served to normalize neoliberal discourse in society; however, in reality, it caused a narrowing of the state's financial autonomy and a weakening of its independence in strategic sectors.²²⁹

Sertan Akbaba's research highlights that Türkiye enacted nine "EU Harmonization Law Packages" between 2002 and 2004 and implemented comprehensive constitutional amendments in 2001 and 2004 as part of its EU alignment efforts.²³⁰ The content of the harmonization packages concerns many different areas, "from the Turkish Penal Code to the Press Law, from the Turkish Civil Code to the Anti-Terror Law, from the Law on Associations to the Constitution of the Republic of Türkiye."²³¹ The European Union (EU) Harmonization Packages that came into force between 2002 and 2004 contained significant reforms in the fields of democracy and human rights as part of Türkiye's alignment process with the EU. These packages expanded freedoms of expression, organization, and assembly; prohibited expressions that insult individuals; introduced the possibility of broadcasting and education in different languages and dialects on radio and television; made it more difficult to ban political parties; and abolished the death penalty under all circumstances. These reforms paved the way for Türkiye to start EU accession negotiations in 2005.²³² However, Akbaba states that these reforms failed to fully achieve social consensus due to the lack of what Rawls calls an "overlapping consensus."²³³

Beril Dedeoğlu interprets Türkiye's EU accession process as both a consequence and a component of globalization dynamics. According to her, this dual process strengthened tendencies to preserve the existing

²²⁹ Ibid., 91-92.

²³⁰ Sertan Akbaba, "AB Sürecinde Türkiye'nin İnsan Hakları ve Milli Kimlik İkilemi," *Akademik Bakış* 10, no. 20 (Haziran 2017): 106. <https://doi.org/10.19060/gav.321030>.

²³¹ Ibid.

²³² Ibid., 107-110.

²³³ John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 212, as cited in Sertan Akbaba, "AB Sürecinde Türkiye'nin İnsan Hakları ve Milli Kimlik İkilemi," *Akademik Bakış* 10, no. 20 (Haziran 2017): 98. <https://doi.org/10.19060/gav.321030>.

structures, relations, and regime in Türkiye; consequently, it gave rise to “nationalist expressions” that fueled opposition to both the EU and globalization.²³⁴ In the post-Cold War era, “globalization came to be identified with Westernization, and Westernization in turn with the EU membership”; this conflation fostered a linkage between opposition to globalization and opposition to the EU.²³⁵ Such an identification, in turn, reinforced the “ambivalent structure” of “Westernizing in spite of the West.”²³⁶

According to Dedeoğlu, following the granting of candidate status in 1999, Türkiye entered a period that may be described as experiencing “the pains of Europeanization.”²³⁷ However, with the start of accession negotiations, a tendency of “moving away from the idea of the EU” also emerged.²³⁸ The structural transformation demands of the EU harmonization process, particularly in a country like Türkiye that is “founded upon the existence and survival of the state,” merged with concerns over “protecting the state.”²³⁹ This situation manifested itself as an effort to preserve an order forced into change by external pressures, ultimately turning into a quest for “a guarantee against occupation, division, and fragmentation.”²⁴⁰

In conclusion, Dedeoğlu argues that the “pressure for change” generated by globalization and the EU process has exerted an influence on Türkiye’s “characteristic behavioral patterns and mechanisms.” This, in turn, has enabled the development of a reaction expressed in the form of “preserving distinctive values and structures.”²⁴¹ Such a reaction found its expression in a nationalist discourse – “inconceivable apart from the state” – extending even to the Constitution.²⁴²

²³⁴ Beril Dedeoğlu, “Türkiye’de AB Karşıtlığı-Küreselleşme Karşıtlığı İlişkisi,” *Uluslararası İlişkiler* 7, no. 28 (Kış 2011): 86. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/43926475>.

²³⁵ Ibid.

²³⁶ Ibid., 87.

²³⁷ Ibid., 88.

²³⁸ Ibid.

²³⁹ Ibid., 91.

²⁴⁰ Ibid., 97.

²⁴¹ Ibid., 98.

²⁴² Ibid., 100.

3.1.3 2007 Constitutional Crisis

The early 2000s witnessed a series of violent acts in Türkiye that significantly heightened social tensions. The assassination of Necip Hablemitoğlu in 2002, the attacks on a synagogue and the British Consulate in Istanbul in 2003, the assault on the Council of State in 2006, the murder of a priest in Trabzon, and finally, the assassination of Hrant Dink and the attack on the Zirve Publishing House in Malatya in 2007 were recorded as symbolic incidents of this period.²⁴³

Parallel to this climate of violence, a significant political crisis also emerged. The impending end of President Ahmet Necdet Sezer's term in May 2007 triggered debates over who would succeed him.²⁴⁴ The first round of voting in the Grand National Assembly of Türkiye (TBMM) on April 27, 2007, was deadlocked due to the CHP's objection regarding the constitutional requirement for a quorum of 367 parliamentarians, triggering a constitutional crisis known as the "367 crisis."²⁴⁵ İsmail Yüksel characterizes this process as "constitutional hardball," (*anayasal zorlama*) emphasizing that the Constitutional Court's intervention outside established interpretations called its legitimacy into question.²⁴⁶ Later that same night, a press statement published on the website of the Chief of General Staff, which went down in history as the "e-memorandum," further escalated the political tension.²⁴⁷ Following the Constitutional Court's annulment of the election process, the government decided to hold early elections on July 22, 2007. After AKP emerged stronger from these elections, the e-memorandum was removed from the website.²⁴⁸

Another significant social movement that gained prominence during this political crisis was the "Republic Rallies." Initiated by Atatürkçü Düşünce Derneği (Atatürkist Thought Association) and Çağdaş Yaşamı

²⁴³ Doğan, "Türkiye'de Asker-Siyaset İlişkisi," 273-274.

²⁴⁴ İsmail Yüksel, "Türkiye'nin 'Anayasal Zorlama' İle Sınanması," *Süleyman Demirel Üniversitesi Hukuk Fakültesi Dergisi* 12, no. 1 (Haziran 2022): 106, <https://doi.org/10.52273/sduhfd.1080147>.

²⁴⁵ Ibid., 106.

²⁴⁶ Ibid., 107-108.

²⁴⁷ Doğan, "Türkiye'de Asker-Siyaset İlişkisi," 279.

²⁴⁸ Ibid., 285-286.

Destekleme Derneği (Association for the Support of Contemporary Living), these rallies gained mass participation with the involvement of other civil society organizations and partially, political parties, intensifying from April 2007 onward.²⁴⁹ An analysis of the rallies' symbolic language and discourse reveals several thematic axes. Slogans such as "We are Soldiers of Mustafa Kemal," "The Spirit of 1920 Lights Our Way," and "We are all Turks, We are all Atatürkists" reflected a desire to return to a "Kemalist golden age."²⁵⁰ Meanwhile, expressions like "We don't want headscarves in Çankaya [the presidential palace]" and "We are women, we are sensitive, we are on Atatürk's path," particularly prominent in these demonstrations where women were at the forefront, reinforced the public perception that the principle of secularism was under threat.²⁵¹ Furthermore, anti-imperialist and nationalist discourses were also prominently featured in the rallies.²⁵² According to Zeynep Kabakçı, this discourse constructed a dual image of the enemy, framing AKP as a "reactionary threat" and the US and EU as "imperialist powers."²⁵³

Another critical aspect of the rallies was their role in constructing a social base of support that legitimized the political tutelage of institutions like the military and the judiciary.²⁵⁴ Slogans that emerged after the April 27 e-memorandum, such as "Let the hands reaching for the army be broken," clearly reflected the tension in civil-military relations and the political position of Kemalist circles, which sanctified the military as the "guardian of the Republic."²⁵⁵

²⁴⁹ Ibid., 277.

²⁵⁰ Menderes Çınar, "Normalleştirmemek," *Birikim Dergisi*, no. 218 (Haziran 2007): 59, as cited in Gülizar Zeynep Kabakçı, "Neo-Kemalist Bir Hareket: Cumhuriyet Mitingleri," *Selçuk İletişim* 7, no. 1 (Kasım 2013):

100, https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/pub/josc/issue/19023/200591#article_cite.

²⁵¹ Gülizar Zeynep Kabakçı, "Neo-Kemalist Bir Hareket: Cumhuriyet Mitingleri," *Selçuk İletişim* 7, no. 1 (Kasım 2013):

107, https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/pub/josc/issue/19023/200591#article_cite.

²⁵² Ibid., 1003-104.

²⁵³ Ibid., 107.

²⁵⁴ Ibid., 106.

²⁵⁵ Ibid., 105-106.

3.2 İstiklâl Marşı Derneği (Association for the Turkish National Anthem)

This section of the study analyzes the institutional structure, ideological foundations, symbolic repertoire, and action strategies of İMDER to demonstrate how İsmet Özel's theoretical framework was translated into a concrete organizational structure. In light of the historical and intellectual background discussed in the previous section, İMDER's claim to politicize Özel's thought and transform it into a "political project" will be evaluated through this institutional framework. This analysis will make it possible to understand how the association positioned itself not merely as a cultural formation but also as a potential political movement claiming to construct an alternative vision to the existing political order.

3.2.1 Founding Philosophy and Ideological Roots

The symbolic and geographical choices of İMDER offer a direct window into its foundational ideology. A most striking concrete manifestation of this claim is the selection of Ankara as the headquarters, despite the residence of its founder and honorary president, the poet and thinker İsmet Özel, being in Istanbul, and the main activities being conducted there. The association explains the rationale for this choice by referencing the composition of İstiklâl Marşı by Mehmet Akif Ersoy in Ankara and the spirit of the War of Independence: "Just as İstiklâl Marşı was born at a time when the *Türk milleti* was condemned to be erased from history by its enemies, İMDER also chose the same place as its birthplace."²⁵⁶ Another manifestation of this fundamental claim is the commitment constituting the association's aim: "to protect and propagate Türkiye's *millî* identity, the historical meaning of the War of Independence, and the values represented by İstiklâl Marşı."²⁵⁷ This commitment is nothing other than an effort to actively re-politicize these values, which are alleged to have been eroded during Türkiye's global

²⁵⁶ İstiklâl Marşı Derneği, "Tanıtım," accessed August 3, 2025, <https://www.istiklalmarsidernegi.org.tr/DernekHakkinda>.

²⁵⁷ Ibid.

integration process in the 2000s. Alongside the headquarters in Ankara, it has branches in Istanbul, Konya, Gaziantep, Şanlıurfa, Adana, and Kahramanmaraş, and a representative office in Sakarya.²⁵⁸ This geographical spread indicates the association's strategy of not remaining merely an intellectual circle but also establishing an organized provincial network across Anatolia.

This institutional structure and symbolic emphasis represent an organizational manifestation of İsmet Özel's theoretical assertion regarding Türkiye's potential to become an independent "homeland" within the Western-centered "world system." Özel's anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist definition of nationalism – that "Turkishness gains meaning precisely to the extent that it highlights its irreconcilability with capitalism" – is concretized in the association's decision to base itself in Ankara and its strategy of expanding across Anatolia.

3.2.2 Manifesto and Symbols

In the association's manifesto, the Turkish homeland is defined as "a unique geographical and historical entity." The source of this uniqueness is its being "the homeland of a *millet* that rejects the orders of global hegemonic powers." The hegemonic power referenced in the text is Western civilization, symbolized by Mehmet Akif Ersoy's line "That single-fanged monster, "Civilisation!" as you call it?" and positioned in opposition to the Islamic nation (*ümmet*).

According to the manifesto, although the *Türk milleti* historically has not been left without land, it has been forced to live in a constant state of a "psychology of deprivation." The collective memory of the nation, alienated from itself and distanced from its core values during the modernization process, has been obfuscated by terminological manipulations. For instance, the use of expressions like "Kurtuluş Savaşı" (Liberation War) instead of "İstiklâl Harbi" (the War of Independence) is presented as an example of this. The text emphasizes that the

²⁵⁸ İstiklâl Marşı Derneği, "Şubeler," accessed August 3, 2025, <https://www.istiklalmarsidernegi.org.tr/Iletisim?SubeId=6>.

fundamental motivation of the 1919-1923 struggle was "independence" (*istiklâl*) and claims that the meaning of the concept of "*millet hayatı*" (the life of the national) has been deliberately distorted. The frequent use of the phrase "we Turks" in the text indicates that the association sees itself as the authentic representative of the *Türk milleti*. In this context, it is stated that İstiklâl Marşı represents the concept of "independence" and that the *Türk milleti* identifies itself with this march.

One of the main arguments highlighted in the manifesto is the belief that Turkish identity and existence are under threat. Approaches that deny the central role of Islam in Türkiye's foundation and qualify the Turkification process of Anatolia as an "occupation" are presented as the source of this threat. It is emphasized that the process beginning in 1071 and completed in the 13th century made Anatolia the Turkish homeland, and that this transformation was not an "invasion" but a "construction of the homeland" (*vatan inşası*).

According to the text, İstiklâl Marşı is not merely a literary text but also a declaration (*beyanname*) explaining the philosophical foundations of the War of Independence. The manifesto argues that nations which constitute turning points in history acquire these qualities through certain critical moments and claims that for *Türk milleti*, this turning point was the War of Independence. The "intellectual framework and willpower" provided by İstiklâl Marşı were decisive in winning this struggle.²⁵⁹

The discourse of this manifesto is an institutional-level echo of İsmet Özel's conceptualization of modernity as a "false religion" and a global "system of unbelief." Özel's thesis – that "Türkiye possesses a unique potential to construct an alternative to this system due to its history of never having been an open colony and the continued central place of Islam in its social fabric" – is transformed, through the manifesto, into a declaration of identity and resistance. The central placement of the

²⁵⁹ All information under this title is derived from İstiklâl Marşı Derneği, "Manifesto," accessed August 3, 2025, <https://www.istiklalmarsidernegi.org.tr/DerneKakkinda?SayfaId=3>.

metaphor of the “single-fanged monster” is a clear indicator of this theoretical framework.

3.2.3 Membership and Organizational Structure

On the membership page of İMDER's official website, alongside documents detailing administrative procedures and an application form, a text emphasizing the intellectual and emotional dimension of membership is notable. According to the text, membership in the association is not merely a bureaucratic procedure but also requires an ideological commitment. The association demands that its members understand the 41 couplets of İstiklâl Marşı based on a common interpretation and stipulates that this interpretation must be "not exceeding the intended meaning" (*maksadı aşmayan*) and "not arbitrary" (*keyfi olmayan*). This approach aims to ensure a consistent consensus of understanding among members. The text emphasizes that membership is a collective responsibility rather than an individual choice. Accordingly, the person who becomes a member moves from among those who "listen to İstiklâl Marşı" to the ranks of those who "recite" it and is expected to act with the consciousness required by this "distinguished" position. Furthermore, association membership is not limited to "becoming a member" but also has a continuous quality involving "remaining a member." The continuity of membership is made conditional upon preserving values such as "unity, togetherness, and integrity" and not allowing these values to be "staled" (*bayatlatılmaması*) or "undermined" (*baltalanmaması*).²⁶⁰

According to the association's fundamental philosophy, İMDER is the establishment of those who "consider being at the command of the *millet* an honor." It is argued that potential objections to this claim (e.g., criticisms that the honor of serving the *millet* is not exclusive to association members) are not of a nature to change their views. For the association claims that the fundamental characteristic distinguishing its

²⁶⁰ All information in this paragraph is derived from İstiklâl Marşı Derneği, “Üyelik,” accessed August 3, 2025, <https://www.istiklalmarsidernegi.org.tr/DernekJakkında?SayfaId=4>.

members from other patriots is their unconditional commitment to being at the command of *Türk milleti*. This approach implies not conditioning this commitment even on other forms of allegiance, such as "obedience to the state."²⁶¹

This emphasis on strict ideological commitment and collective responsibility within the membership definition constitutes the organized expression of the states of "conscious alienation" and "maintaining intransigence" that İsmet Özel envisions for the Muslim individual. Özel's theoretical formulation – "A Muslim must possess a mental structure outside the logical fabric of the age" – is transformed into a prerequisite for association membership. This can be interpreted as an effort to convert the theoretically conceived typology of the "Muslim with personality" into a "cadre discipline."

3.2.4 Goals and Activities

The association's founding philosophy is based on three fundamental principles stated in its bylaws: (I) To Establish the Foundations for a Dignified Human Existence: To establish a social order where individuals can live with dignity and freedom, based on the principle that such an existence is contingent upon the preservation and flourishing of one's *millî* identity. (II) To Promote and Uphold the Principles of İstiklâl Marşı: To adopt, safeguard, and disseminate the core, inviolable principles enshrined in İstiklâl Marşı – namely, Turkish independence, the integrity of the Turkish homeland, and the sanctity of the Turkish flag – as fundamental guiding tenets in all circumstances. (III) To Preserve Compatible *Millî* and Local Traditions: To protect and revitalize local customs and traditions that are congruent with the principles of İstiklâl Marşı, thereby strengthening *millî* unity. A further objective is to critically examine and elucidate the societal cost of efforts to marginalize the Anthem and undermine loyalty to the *millî* ethos.²⁶²

²⁶¹ All information in this paragraph is derived from İstiklâl Marşı Derneği, "Tanıtım," accessed August 3, 2025, <https://www.istiklalmarsidernegi.org.tr/DernekHakkinda>.

²⁶² All information in this paragraph is derived from İstiklâl Marşı Derneği, "Amacımız," accessed August 3, 2025, <https://www.istiklalmarsidernegi.org.tr/DernekHakkinda?SayfaId=2>.

To these ends, the association organizes seminars, panels, and cultural events; provides educational and scholarship support; and publishes periodical and non-periodical publications. Furthermore, it establishes commercial enterprises to generate income and conducts activities both domestically and internationally.²⁶³

An examination of the association's website reveals its activity in numerous areas despite a narrow cadre. For instance, members of İstiklâl Korusu (Independence Choir) are involved in both musical activities (choir and instruments) and other endeavors such as panels and publications. The Video Archive (Görüntü Kayıtları) section on the website contains over a hundred event videos, and İstiklâl Korusu²⁶⁴ section features fifteen concert recordings. These activities can be categorized as follows:

- Branch Openings and Expansion Efforts: The branching process, which began in 2011 with Adana and İzmir, continued with cities like Giresun and Sakarya. Openings featured conferences by İsmet Özel on various topics, press conferences, and radio programs.²⁶⁵
- Political and Legal Dimensions of İstiklâl Marşı: With the panel titled "Anayasadan İstiklâl Marşı Çıkmaz, İstiklâl Marşı'ndan Anayasa Çıkar" ("İstiklâl Marşı Cannot Be Removed from the Constitution, a Constitution Can Emerge from İstiklâl Marşı") held in Ankara in 2011, the association placed the "new constitution" issue on its agenda; it subsequently organized various events addressing the topic from different angles.²⁶⁶
- International Activities: Activities abroad began in 2011 in Leiden, the Netherlands, and continued with meetings held in Germany (Berlin, Duisburg, Mannheim) between 2013 and 2014.²⁶⁷

²⁶³ İstiklâl Marşı Derneği, "Tüzük," accessed August 3, 2025, <https://www.istiklalmarsidernegi.org.tr/DernekJakkında?SayfaId=5>.

²⁶⁴ İstiklâl Marşı Derneği, "İstiklâl Korusu," accessed August 3, 2025, <https://www.istiklalmarsidernegi.org.tr/AltKategoriler?Id=15>.

²⁶⁵ İstiklâl Marşı Derneği, "Görüntü Kayıtları," accessed August 3, 2025, <https://www.istiklalmarsidernegi.org.tr/Videolar?Tipi=2&KategoriId=1066>.

²⁶⁶ İstiklâl Marşı Derneği, "Görüntü Kayıtları," accessed August 3, 2025, <https://www.istiklalmarsidernegi.org.tr/Videolar?Tipi=2&KategoriId=1066>.

²⁶⁷ İstiklâl Marşı Derneği, "Görüntü Kayıtları," accessed August 3, 2025, <https://www.istiklalmarsidernegi.org.tr/Videolar?Tipi=2&KategoriId=1066>.

- Programs on Turkish Identity, Independence, and the Turkish Language: Since 2011, conferences, panels, and talks on Turkish identity, the *Türk milleti*, independence, and the Turkish language have been held in various cities.²⁶⁸

- Commemorative and Traditional Programs: Notable are the *mevlid* (recitation of poems praising Prophet Muhammad) and İstiklâl Marşı recitations held at Kastamonu's Nasrullah Mosque, the location where İstiklâl Marşı was first read by Mehmet Âkif. Additionally, the association has held holiday greeting events open to its members and participants on religious holidays, during which İsmet Özel gave speeches. Speeches made during branch board and general assembly meetings were also broadcast via social media.²⁶⁹

- Media Work: Between 2011 and 2013, participation in programs on Sky Türk 360, TRT, and various local television/radio stations aimed to achieve mass visibility.²⁷⁰

- Publication Activities: The association has regularly organized events to promote its publications issued by Tam İstiklâl Yayıncılık Ortaklığı (the Full Independence Publishing Partnership, TİYO). *Sınıf Bilinci* (Class Consciousness) panels (2016 - 2017), and promotions for *İstiklâl Takvimi* (Independence Calendar) and the book, *Dil ile İkrar* (Affirmation through Language) are prominent within this framework.^{271 272}

- Cultural Exhibitions: Poster exhibitions were held in 2012 for the 5th anniversary of *Sönmez Ocak*²⁷³ (in Adana, Trabzon, Osmaniye, Sivas,

²⁶⁸ İstiklâl Marşı Derneği, “Görüntü Kayıtları,” accessed August 3, 2025, <https://www.istiklalmarsidernegi.org.tr/Videolar?Tipi=2&KategoriId=1066>.

²⁶⁹ İstiklâl Marşı Derneği, “Görüntü Kayıtları,” accessed August 3, 2025, <https://www.istiklalmarsidernegi.org.tr/Videolar?Tipi=2&KategoriId=1066>.

²⁷⁰ İstiklâl Marşı Derneği, “Görüntü Kayıtları,” accessed August 3, 2025, <https://www.istiklalmarsidernegi.org.tr/Videolar?Tipi=2&KategoriId=1066>.

²⁷¹ İstiklâl Marşı Derneği, “Neştiyatımız,” accessed August 3, 2025, <http://www.istiklalmarsidernegi.org.tr/AltKategoriler?Id=1079>.

²⁷² İstiklâl Marşı Derneği, “Görüntü Kayıtları,” accessed August 3, 2025, <https://www.istiklalmarsidernegi.org.tr/Videolar?Tipi=2&KategoriId=1066>.

²⁷³ With reference to the line from İstiklâl Marşı –“Sönmeden yurdumun üstünde tüten en son ocak”(the last hearth smoking over my homeland, not yet extinguished)– İMDER refers to itself in various contexts as “Sönmez Ocak” (the inextinguishable hearth).

Erzincan-Başbağlar) and the "Muvakkitin Gözyaşları" (The Clockmaker's Tears) exhibition was organized in 2021.²⁷⁴

- İstiklâl Korosu: The choir formed from association members, has held concerts in the provinces of Istanbul, Ankara, Kastamonu, Konya, Adana, Kahramanmaraş, and Sakarya.²⁷⁵

- İstiklâl Marşı Arşivi (The Archive for İstiklâl Marşı): İstiklâl Marşı Arşivi on İMDER's website is a comprehensive digital collection containing works by Mehmet Akif Ersoy, news, articles, documents, written texts, visual materials, and audio recordings related to the acceptance process of the march, its stages of composition, and its reflections throughout history.²⁷⁶ This archive serves as a significant reference source for researchers and those interested in learning about the text, composition, and studies shaped around İstiklâl Marşı.

- Pazar Ola: It is a consumer cooperative founded by İMDER in 2016 in Eyüp, Istanbul (on the same street as the association itself). Although it appears to be a simple food supply outlet, it rests on an ideological foundation based on the principle that *"Without a national market, there can be no national unity."* This initiative aims to preserve authentic and local production in opposition to the profit-centered logic of the capitalist system. By delivering products such as *tarhana*, *bulgur*, *legumes*, *tomato paste*, and *olive oil* from the association's provincial branches to the public in Istanbul, Pazar Ola both supports producers and provides consumers with trustworthy food. Thus, it is positioned not only as an economic mechanism but also as a bearer of cultural and moral order. Through this cooperative, the association's ultimate aim is to ensure the self-sufficiency of the *Türk milletî* and to establish a truly *millî* way of life. Pazar Ola preserves the culinary heritage of the Turkish household – framed by the question "what should or should not be on the Turkish table?" – while simultaneously sustaining a market ethos grounded in solidarity and trust among members. In line with the

²⁷⁴ İstiklâl Marşı Derneği, "Görüntü Kayıtları," accessed August 3, 2025, <https://www.istiklalmarsidernegi.org.tr/Videolar?Tipi=2&KategoriId=1066>.

²⁷⁵ İstiklâl Marşı Derneği, "İstiklâl Korosu," accessed August 3, 2025, <https://www.istiklalmarsidernegi.org.tr/AltKategoriler?Id=15>.

²⁷⁶ İstiklâl Marşı Derneği, "İstiklâl Marşı Arşivi" accessed August 3, 2025, <https://www.istiklalmarsidernegi.org.tr/IcerikDetay?Id=7>.

Association's assertion that "the War of Independence is not over," the cooperative represents more than an economic enterprise; it stands as both the economic foundation of national unity and an ideological manifestation of that struggle.²⁷⁷

These multifaceted activities of İMDER constitute the practical manifestations of İsmet Özel's project of constructing a comprehensive alternative to the "world system." In particular, the Pazar Ola Cooperative is a concrete, practical embodiment of Özel's critique of capitalism as "an order in which human relations are converted into money" and his theoretical proposition that "without a *millî* market, there can be no *millî* unity." Similarly, publishing activities (TİYO) and *İstiklâl Takvimi* serve as institutional instruments for Özel's call for an "epistemological break" against Western tools of epistemological domination (the modern calendar, language, and understanding of science). All these activities are practical steps toward building an alternative way of life, going beyond mere theoretical critique.

3.3 İMDER's Visual Language

İMDER employs a rich visual and symbolic repertoire that clearly reflects its ideological and political position. However, this repertoire signifies more than the sum of its parts; they are the concrete manifestations of the association's claim to develop a singular and identical national-Islamic identity grounded in references to *İstiklâl Marşı* and the War of Independence, rejecting the national-Islamic distinction upon which modern Türkiye's secular-national identity construction is based, and to reconstruct this identity in every sphere of daily life (from language to economy, from time to politics). This claim reveals itself in every detail, from the design of the association's website to the rituals of its events.

This identity imagination is constructed primarily through a symbolism that emphasizes the identity of the national and the religious, countering the codes of republican modernization that separate them.

²⁷⁷ Oruç Özel, "Toparlanın Gitmiyoruz Paneli," *İstiklâl Marşı Derneği*, accessed August 4, 2015, <https://www.istiklalmarsidernegi.org.tr/IcerikDetay?Id=3&IcerikId=3156&PageId=2>.

The Map of Misak-ı Millî.²⁷⁸ located on the top left of the homepage, bearing the Ottoman alphabet inscription "*Türkelî*" (Land of the Turks), is imbued with a historical and religious meaning beyond national borders and defined as "the lands from which we said we cannot retreat." The association grounds its legitimacy in a religious basis by interpreting the retreat to Anatolia after the loss of Medina as a "second hijra" and comparing it to "the haram area drawn by the Prophet in Medina."²⁷⁹ Similarly, the preference for the crescent facing left (the rising moon) is grounded as a conscious ideological stance symbolizing the belief that "Türkiye will not set," rather than merely a technical flexibility in the flag regulation. Primarily, the flag should be referred to as "crescent-star" (*hılal-yıldız*), not "moon-star" (*ay-yıldız*). On the other hand, the flag regulation does not specify which direction the crescent should face; it contains the phrase "its tip faces the direction of the flow," meaning the direction it faces can change with the wind. However, İMDER states: "Because we do not believe that the Republic of Türkiye is setting and will disappear, we depict our flag in printed materials, on paper, as a rising moon, that is, in the form of a crescent." The association characterizes depicting the crescent on the flag as a "setting moon" as a deliberate effort to conceal the Republic's rise and its potential to be a means of salvation for the world, and claims that this change is relatively recent, arguing that in examples from the early Republican period, the crescent was always drawn as a rising moon.²⁸⁰

Another fundamental pillar of this identity construction is its language and time policies. İMDER uses Ottoman Turkish and the Latin alphabet together in all its printed and digital materials. Over time, it is observed that some of its content began to be produced entirely in

²⁷⁸ İMDER defines *Misak-ı Millî* (the National Pact) as follows: "Misak-I Milli refers to the territories that the Turks stated they could not retreat from." A map of *Misak-ı Millî* is used in many of the association's materials. See İstiklâl Marşı Derneği, "Türkelî'nin Nüfus Kaydı," accessed August 3, 2025, <http://www.istiklalmarsidernegi.org.tr/IcerikDetay?Id=1042&IcerikId=1281>.

²⁷⁹ Durmuş Küçükşakalak, "Türkün Menbaı Medine," *Çelimli Çalım*, no. 10 (Nisan 2015): 2.

²⁸⁰ Oruç Özel, "Tek Dil Olmadan Tek Millet, Tek Devlet, Tek Vatan, Tek Bayrak Olmaz," İstiklâl Marşı Derneği, 1 Nisan 2017, erişim 2 Ağustos

Ottoman Turkish. The introduction of *İstiklâl Elifbası* (Independence Primer) they published for interested persons to learn contains the following statements: "For us as a nation to discover our own existence, it is necessary to start from the beginning, that is, from the alphabet. *İstiklâl Elifbası*, prepared for this purpose, also points to a brand-new beginning in learning the alphabet and Turkish literacy."²⁸¹ The magazine they published for children named *Sınıf Bilinci* (Class Consciousness) carries a similar aim: "We will take back our alphabet, but how? *Sınıf Bilinci* is being published to clarify the answer to this question. Our Autumn issue, the first step of a three-year publication, will teach the indispensability of reading and writing Turkish. In *Sınıf Bilinci*, priority is given to our children. In our Autumn issue, rich with pictures, children will read fine examples of our literature in the true form of the Turkish alphabet. There is also plenty of pictures and information about our homeland, our history, and our geography. Do not think that *Sınıf Bilinci* is published only for our children; it also invites young people who directly bypass classes and see the truth, and the elderly who say "it's too late for us," to turn back from their errors."²⁸² As we will see in the next section of this study, the phrase "We will take back our alphabet" reflects the association's most fundamental policy, and it is evident that they are engaged in an active effort to concretize this policy.

İstiklâl Takvimi which they publish both in print and digitally entirely in Ottoman Turkish, is one of the concrete outputs of the association's discourse. The real-time operation of the Hijri calendar and alaturka time (where the day begins with the evening call to prayer) in the left column of İMDER's website symbolizes a defense of an Islamic-traditional chronology and daily rhythm against the modern-secular time regime and its standardization. It is noteworthy that the association chooses nostalgic, aesthetic, and simple designs for all its printed and digital materials. In addition to this, in all its written and verbal discourses, when referring to dates according to the Gregorian calendar, the

²⁸¹ İstiklâl Marşı Derneği, "İstiklâl Elifbası Neşrolundu," August 3, 2025.

<http://www.istiklalmarsidernegi.org.tr/IcerikDetay?Id=3&IcerikId=2016&PageId=7>

²⁸² Ibid.

association uses the phrase "according to the Christian calendar."²⁸³ It is observed that they use the Hijri calendar for day-month-year expressions in their printed materials and event announcements.

The association is in an effort to institutionalize the "Islamic identity imagination," which it expresses in all its discourses and identifies with Turkishness, in the intellectual and economic fields as well. TİYO is not merely a publishing house but also the central platform that conceptualizes the association's emphasis on "full independence" (*tam istiklâl*) and intellectual production. Similarly, the Pazar Ola consumer cooperative, with its slogan "Without a *millî* market, there can be no *millî* unity,"²⁸⁴ aims to realize a *millî* and local economic imagination as an alternative to the global capitalist order. By transforming everyday consumption practices, the cooperative turns the association's ideological preferences into a concrete lifestyle proposal.

İMDER's symbolic repertoire seeks concrete social resonance by materializing in event rituals and mobilization practices. Programs such as panels, seminars, and conferences begin with all association members and participants standing up together and singing the *tekbir* (chant of Allahu Akbar) and *salavat* (blessings upon the Prophet) composed by İtrî. Afterwards, they recite İstiklâl Marşı together in their own distinctive style. This issue is explained as follows: "To recite İstiklâl Marşı with the current melody in use today is hostility towards İstiklâl Marşı. Hostility towards İstiklâl Marşı is hostility towards Türkiye, hostility towards Türkiye is hostility towards Islam. Nothing can be understood from its current state."²⁸⁵ The association's symbolism regarding İstiklâl Marşı is at a high level. On the anniversaries of İMDER's foundation, they have organized events such as gathering at the Nasrullah Mosque in Kastamonu, where İstiklâl Marşı was first read by

²⁸³ İstiklâl Marşı Derneği, "Miladi Takvim Değil Hristiyan Takvimi," August 3, 2025. <http://www.istiklalmarsidernegi.org.tr/IcerikDetay?Id=1070&IcerikId=1495>.

²⁸⁴ İsmet Özel, "Milli Pazar Olmadan Milli Birlik Olmaz Konferansı," Konuşma, Ankara, 5 Ekim 2009. İstiklâl Marşı Derneği web sitesinde yayımlanmıştır. Accessed August 4, 2015, <https://istiklalmarsidernegi.org.tr/IcerikDetay?Id=1063&IcerikId=137>.

²⁸⁵ Durmuş Küçükşakalak, "Türk Kim? Türkiye Neresi? İstiklâl Marşı Neyin Nesi?" Konuşma, Kastamonu, 11 Mart 2017. İstiklâl Marşı Derneği web sitesinde yayımlanmıştır. Accessed August 3, 2025. <http://www.istiklalmarsidernegi.org.tr/IcerikDetay?Id=1046&IcerikId=1708>.

Mehmet Akif, reciting Qur'an, *mevlid* (poems praising Prophet Muhammad), and İstiklâl Marşı, and delivering speeches addressed to the public.^{286 287} These can also be evaluated as rituals through which the Association aims to build a shared belonging and a mystical sense of togetherness. The filling of large municipal halls and the presence of audiences standing indicate the association's capacity to massify this symbolic language.

İstiklâl Korosu which performs music at İMDER's events, is also part of its repertoire of action. The association views its musical performance through İstiklâl Korosu not as a purely artistic activity but as a means of representing an ideological and identity-based mission. The association aims to foreground the concept it calls the "Turkish sound." This expression symbolizes not only a musical timbre but also the authenticity of the Turkish language in written and oral expression, the manifestation of the Islamic-*millî* identity through sound, and the historical continuity of this identity. For the association, music is not a tool for entertainment but a carrier used to "announce" this identity, keep it alive, and embed it in social memory. Even when performing traditional Turkish music repertoire, it is particularly emphasized that the purpose is not "entertainment" but to build a belonging and revival through this sound. This approach ideologically separates the association from traditional musicians and music lovers who use music purely for aesthetic or pleasure purposes. Therefore, the choir functions as an audible manifesto of İMDER's national-Islamic identity imagination and a tool for social mobilization.²⁸⁸

²⁸⁶ İstiklâl Marşı Derneği. "Sene-i Devriyemizde Kastamonu Nasrullah Camii'nde Mevlid-i Şerif Okuyoruz." Accessed August 3, 2025.

<http://www.istiklalmarsidernegi.org.tr/IcerikDetay?Id=1042&IcerikId=1241>.

²⁸⁷ During one of these events, the association members were prevented by the security forces and thus could not recite İstiklâl Marşı inside the mosque; they were compelled to hold their demonstration outside. For more details see İstiklâl Marşı Derneği. "Nasrullah Camii'nde Mevlid-i Şerif Okuduk, İstiklâl Marşı Okutulmadı." Accessed August 3, 2025.

<http://www.istiklalmarsidernegi.org.tr/IcerikDetay?Id=1042&IcerikId=1383>.

²⁸⁸ İstiklâl Marşı Derneği, "Türkiye'den Türkeli'ne Varalım Paneli İstanbul'da Yapıldı," accessed August 3, 2025.

<https://www.istiklalmarsidernegi.org.tr/IcerikDetay?Id=3&IcerikId=2127>.

Ultimately, this visual-symbolic language is crowned with an explicit political claim and a desire for intervention. The association explicitly declares in its own texts that it directly intervenes in the political agenda. It states that as soon as the new constitution debates began (as of 2011), they organized two panels and press conferences; they printed their declarations, explanations, and warnings on this issue and delivered them to the Presidency of TBMM, the Constitution Commission of TBMM, the Prime Ministry, parties in the Assembly, and all 24th Term deputies.²⁸⁹ As conveyed by İsmet Özel in his internal speeches to the association, İMDER has periodically explored the possibility of transitioning into active politics; held meetings with "solid" local actors; and adopted the strategy that "it will enter politics when it sees that it will be the only one whose word counts in Türkiye."²⁹⁰ These practices show that the ultimate goal of this repertoire is not limited to cultural resistance but carries the claim of becoming a public-political interlocutor and ultimately crossing the threshold to power. These discourses and actions position İMDER not merely as a cultural/intellectual circle but as a potential political actor calculating election-geopolitics and the threshold of power.

The wearing of uniforms with various slogans in Ottoman Turkish and various visuals at events such as panels, seminars, and conferences by İMDER members, and the events they organize in places of symbolic importance (such as the village of Başbağlar) can be read as parts of this symbolic and emblematic repertoire of action.

The determinative nature of İsmet Özel's central position in the association is first strikingly evident in the visual and text on the homepage when the İMDER website is opened. Özel has continued to publish his weekly writings on the association's internet platform since the association's establishment. While Özel was actively involved in association activities in previous years (as a speaker in seminars, singing in the choir, etc.), he has recently been participating as a listener. It is observed that Özel gives speeches only on special occasions (on holidays,

²⁸⁹ Küçükşakalak, "Yamayasa," 2.

²⁹⁰ Özel, "Bir Milletin Ümidi Yoksa Kendisi de Yoktur," 20-21.

at association general assemblies) at the association headquarters. These are published on the website. In event announcements, the phrase "Under the Patronage of Our Honorary General President, the Poet İsmet Özel" is seen.^{291 292} These symbolic and emblematic elements highlight İsmet Özel's central position and leadership.

This rich symbolic repertoire of İMDER is a visual, auditory, and ritualistic manifestation of İsmet Özel's theoretical stance, which rejects modernity in its entirety and aims to construct an Islamic alternative against it. The use of Ottoman Turkish and the emphasis on the Hijri calendar represent the association's challenge to the modern-secular regime of time and language. This reflects an institutional embodiment of Özel's attitude, which views modernity as a "spiritual veil cast over people" and a "false religion," and seeks to produce a comprehensive alternative to it. The emphasis on the "rising crescent" on the flag and the pursuit of the "Turkish Sound" are efforts to concretize Özel's theoretical definition that "Turkishness has no meaning other than carrying the banner of Islam." Ultimately, this entire symbolic language demonstrates how Özel's call for an "epistemological break" and "conscious alienation" against the "world system" finds resonance in every aspect of daily life.

3.4 İMDER's Political Potential

The capacity of İMDER to transform into a political movement requires examination through different social theory perspectives, centered around the question of to what extent it can institutionalize İsmet Özel's theoretical Islamist vision. Max Weber's analysis of charismatic authority, Samuel P. Huntington's theory of institutionalization, Sidney Tarrow's dynamics of social movements, and Charles Tilly's collective action repertoire approach offer complementary analytical frameworks

²⁹¹ For an example see İstiklâl Marşı Derneği, "Türküm Doğruyum İntikamım Ülkemdir Panelinin Tam Metni," accessed August 3, 2025.

<https://istiklalmarsidernegi.org.tr/IcerikDetay?Id=1063&IcerikId=1538&PageId=1>

²⁹² For an example see İstiklâl Marşı Derneği, "Ne Dediğini Bilmek, Bildiğini Okumak Semineri" accessed August 3, 2025.

<https://www.istiklalmarsidernegi.org.tr/IcerikDetay?Id=3&IcerikId=1343>

for conceptualizing this structure's ideological foundations, organizational strategies, and limitations.

From a Weberian perspective, İMDER stands out as a structure with revolutionary claims, shaped around a charismatic leader figure and deriving legitimacy through intellectual vanguardism. In Weber's terms, charismatic authority rests on "the extraordinary qualities attributed to an individual personality."²⁹³ İsmet Özel's intellectual transformation and poetic production make him a leader fitting this description. The legitimacy of charismatic authority depends on "a recognition that is freely given."²⁹⁴ The members of İMDER embracing Özel as a "guide to truth" is an indicator of this voluntary commitment. However, as Weber warns, "if the leader is forsaken by success, charismatic authority is likely to disappear."²⁹⁵ Consequently, İMDER exhibits a strong yet fragile charismatic structure.

The inherent drawbacks of this charismatic structure are also evident in İsmet Özel's own observations. Özel clearly perceived the risk of the association becoming a structure dependent on his own person and issued warnings aimed at overcoming this situation. Indeed, in a speech published in *İstiklâl Yürüyüşü*, he indicated the need to depersonalize the institutional identity by stating, "This is not the İsmet Özel association; it is İstiklâl Marşı Derneği."²⁹⁶ In another statement, he underlined that the association was neither a club nor a religious order (*tarikat*), saying, "We have no counterparts... This is not a spiritual path (*meşrep*) or a religious order. This is İstiklâl Marşı Derneği."²⁹⁷ These emphases by Özel reflect an effort to transform İMDER from merely a community centered around a charismatic leader into an ideological "cadre movement." However, the inability of these discourses to effectively alter the association's Weberian charismatic structure in practice resulted in İMDER maintaining the fragility inherent in its leader-centric nature.

²⁹³ Max Weber, "Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology," ed. Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), 241.

²⁹⁴ Ibid., 242.

²⁹⁵ Ibid.

²⁹⁶ Özel, *İstiklâl Yürüyüşü*, 179.

²⁹⁷ Ibid., 204.

A Huntingtonian framework allows us to consider İMDER as an institutionalization project. Political development is “the institutionalization of political organizations and procedures.”²⁹⁸ The criteria of adaptability, complexity, autonomy, and coherence are decisive within this framework.²⁹⁹ Although İMDER demonstrates functional diversity through activities such as publishing, cooperativism, and symbolic production, its lack of a mass base and its elitist structure bring forth the risk of “political decay” emphasized by Huntington.³⁰⁰ In this respect, İMDER is an example of institutionalization with strong ideological coherence but limited societal pervasiveness.

Sidney Tarrow’s social movement theory provides a robust framework for analyzing İMDER’s emergence, strategies, and limitations. The association’s formation capitalized on a shift in the political opportunity structure,³⁰¹ namely the political tensions of the 2007 constitutional crisis and critiques of global capitalism, which Tarrow identifies as a key catalyst, stating “political opportunities translate the potential for movement into mobilization.”³⁰² To mobilize its base, İMDER effectively constructed a unique collective identity through cultural framing and a distinct repertoire of contention,³⁰³ employing symbols like the performance of İstiklâl Marşı and Ottoman Turkish, and initiatives like “Pazar Ola.” However, as Tarrow argues, movements that fail to trigger broader cycles of protest³⁰⁴ remain limited. Despite its strong symbolic production, İMDER could not cascade beyond its core network to achieve massification, ultimately remaining a potent but contained movement.

Tilly’s conception of social movements is illuminating for explaining İMDER’s public performances. A social movement consists of “sustained

²⁹⁸ Samuel P. Huntington, “Political Development and Political Decay,” “World Politics” 17, no. 3 (1965): 393, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2009286>.

²⁹⁹ Ibid., 394.

³⁰⁰ Ibid., 405-407.

³⁰¹ Sidney Tarrow, “Power in Movement: Social Movements, Collective Action and Politics” (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 17-18.

³⁰² Ibid., 17.

³⁰³ Ibid., 19.

³⁰⁴ Ibid., 24-25.

challenges to power holders.”³⁰⁵ Through panels, publications, and rituals, İMDER produces sustained challenges. The parameters of worthiness, unity, numbers, and commitment (WUNC) determine the legitimacy of movements.³⁰⁶ In İMDER, commitment and unity are strong; membership is defined as a relationship of guarantee (*kefalet*). However, there are significant limitations in the “numbers” dimension. Furthermore, as Tilly warns, movements are not “groups” but “interactive processes.”³⁰⁷ İMDER, too, is not a group but an interaction network organized around Özel’s ideas. Nevertheless, its mass deficiency limits its political power.

This limitation of İMDER in the “numbers” dimension can be explained not only by external factors but also by the organization’s consciously adopted strategy of being a “cadre movement.” İsmet Özel’s vision positioned the association as an elite “cadre” that would sow the seeds of long-term transformation, rather than as a mass political party. According to Özel’s own statement, the goal was not to be a direct transformative force in daily politics but rather to “ensure that if something new is to begin after everything is lost, it will be us who start it.”³⁰⁸ While this strategic choice endowed İMDER with intellectual depth and ideological purity, it also constituted a structural obstacle to building a mass base that would nourish the “numbers” factor in Tilly’s model. Consequently, the deficiency in “numbers” is not merely an outcome but also a reflection of the organization’s own ideological-political choices.

In conclusion, the four theoretical perspectives demonstrate that while İMDER constitutes a strong focus of ideological and cultural resistance, its capacity to transform into a political movement remains limited due to its dependence on charismatic leadership, lack of mass appeal, and elitist structure. Therefore, although İMDER has transferred İsmet Özel’s vision to an institutional plane, it remains primarily an intellectual community.

³⁰⁵ Charles Tilly, “Social Movements as Historically Specific Clusters of Political Performances,” “Berkeley Journal of Sociology” 38 (1993): 8, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41035464>.

³⁰⁶ Ibid., 15.

³⁰⁷ Ibid., 4-6.

³⁰⁸ Özel, *İstiklâl Yürüyüşü*, 394.

3.5 Quest to Overcome Modernity: A Shared Intellectual Challenge

İsmet Özel's critique of modernity, Western civilization, and technology, developed within the Turkish context, can be read as part of a universal experience of modernization. To reveal this universality at a theoretical level, the framework put forth by historian Harry Harootunian in his work *Overcome by Modernity*, which analyzes Japan's interwar period, is highly illuminating. Harootunian argues that the experience of modernization in "late"-capitalist societies is a particularly distinct and contradictory manifestation of the "uneven and combined development" created by modernity.

One of Harootunian's central theses is that the intellectual and cultural tension in these societies stems from a state of consciousness "suspended between the peril of being overcome by modernity and the impossible imperative of overcoming it."³⁰⁹ This formulation almost exactly corresponds to İsmet Özel's fundamental concern regarding Türkiye's modernization process. Özel views modernization in Türkiye as the effort of a Muslim society "to move away from its own intrinsic values" and become modern in the Western sense, diagnosing the situation as follows:

Especially during the periods when Western civilization exerted pressure on Islamic countries, a disease that we have still not been able to escape has gnawed at our minds: discouragement in the face of the West's material, that is, technical power. This discouragement has inspired many intellectuals, in their search for a way out, with the following solution: let us adopt the technology—which is the foundation of the era's (that is, the West's) material power— but keep its moral and intellectual values away from ourselves. In this regard, the example of Japan has also become a cliché.³¹⁰

³⁰⁹ Harry D. Harootunian, *Overcome by Modernity: History, Culture, and Community in Interwar Japan*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), x.

³¹⁰ Özel, *Üç Zor Mesele*, 95.

Both thinkers emphasize that modernization is not merely a technological or economic matter, but rather a profound cultural and existential crisis. Drawing on the example of Japan, Harootunian speaks of the state of being a "copy of a copy" and a "mask covering a mask" created by this process.³¹¹ This expression points to a common ground with İsmet Özel's radical criticism that the very concept of "civilization," which he persistently highlights for Türkiye, is itself an idol of modernity. Özel's following words strongly support this shared theme: "The point that we must grasp clearly and consciously is that the West is a whole with its faith, philosophy, science, and technology; if it is to be rejected, it must be rejected entirely, and if it is to be accepted, it must likewise be accepted entirely."³¹²

Another critical intersection between the two thinkers lies in their level of analysis regarding how the cultural crisis created by the modernization process sets the stage for political consequences. Harootunian suggests that in Japan, the modernist cultural reaction simultaneously prepared the "gathering ground" for fascism.³¹³ This analysis bears an abstract parallel to İsmet Özel's identification of the modern world order as a "system of unbelief" (*küfür sistemi*) and his emphasis on the totalitarian character of this system. Both thinkers underline that capitalist modernization is not only an economic but also an ideological and dominative whole. However, Özel's analysis is not directly related to fascism but to the system as a whole:

The point that must be thoroughly understood is this: the world system derives its power not from mobilizing its material means, but from the spiritual veil it casts over people. In other words, the world system is able to keep people under its rule by presenting a belief and a chain of beliefs. These beliefs have no parallel with any traditional religion. Therefore, we are not mistaken in considering the world system and the system of disbelief [kufr] as the same thing. The course of the world system's increasing

³¹¹ Harootunian, *Overcome by Modernity*, x.

³¹² Özel, *Üç Zor Mesele*, 96.

³¹³ Harootunian, *Overcome by Modernity*, xx.

power throughout history may also show us that it was born and grew not as an economic-social-political system, but as a belief (i.e., heresy/zandaqa) system. The system can only spread where it finds a medium to spread. Before establishing factual superiority, it is intellectually accepted.³¹⁴

Ultimately, both thinkers pursue the reconstruction of culture and everyday life as a field of resistance against this material and spiritual domination. Harootunian focuses on the efforts of Japanese modernists to resist the uncertainty created by capitalist culture and modern life. They sought "to resist the culture of capitalism" and its "social and economic uncertainty" by seeking "a refuge against the alienating effects of everyday modern life."³¹⁵ İsmet Özel, in turn, transforms this practice of resistance into an effort to construct a "conscious Muslim" typology and realize the ideas of a "*millî pazar*" (national market) and "full independence" (*tam istiklâl*) through institutions such as İstiklâl Marşı Derneği and the Pazar Ola Cooperative. Özel emphasizes that Türkiye's historically unique conditions—its status of not having been an "open colony" and the central place of Islam in its social fabric—create the possibility for this resistance.

In conclusion, Harootunian's analysis of "late-capitalist" Japan provides a powerful framework for situating İsmet Özel's thought within a global and theoretical context. In both contexts, the experience of modernity has created a condition of "double life" and the "synchronicity of the non-synchronous"; this has inevitably brought with it a search for an authentic cultural identity and political autonomy.³¹⁶ In this sense, Özel's project is a quest to "overcome modernity" that springs from Türkiye's unique conditions yet deeply shares common ground with the global critique of capitalist modernity.

³¹⁴ Özel, *Cuma Mektupları-II*, 55.

³¹⁵ Harootunian, *Overcome by Modernity*, xxi.

³¹⁶ Ibid., xvii.

Çelimli Çalım: Ideology and Identity

In *Çelimli Çalım*, İstiklâl Marşı is evaluated not merely as a national symbol but also as a constitutional text, a political and economic program, and even a doctrinal framework.³¹⁷ This approach also encompasses the claim of İMDER to base its critique of the current order on a proposal for an alternative and foundational system.

This intellectual framework of the association became most visibly apparent in *Çelimli Çalım*, its first periodical published between 2014 and 2015 for a total of 18 issues, which proclaimed itself to be "*Türk Milliyetçilerinin mecmuası*" (the journal of Turkish Nationalists).^{318 319} The journal, which explained its publication policy with the statement of intent to "inflict lasting wounds that they will never forget throughout their lives upon those who harm the Turk, the Turkish language, and Türkiye with a blunt sword," and adopted the motto "Plain, Pure, Merciless," developed a discourse that is not only intellectual but also militant.³²⁰ This discourse transforms *Çelimli Çalım* from an ordinary intellectual publication into a direct arena for ideological struggle. In this context, the journal serves as a platform where İMDER discusses current

³¹⁷ Torak, "Vav'lı Türk'ün Kuyruğuna Yapışanlar," 8.

³¹⁸ Oruç Özel, "Çelimli Çalım'ın Hitamı, Haklı Yumruklar'ın Bidayeti," arka kapak, *Çelimli Çalım*, no. 18 (Aralık 2015).

³¹⁹ Durmuş Küçükşakalak, "Türk Milliyetçilerinin Mecmuası," *Çelimli Çalım*, no. 1 (Temmuz 2014): 2.

³²⁰ Ibid.

political issues, as well as a primary medium through which it addresses its ideas and proposals on various topics – such as Türkiye's modernization process, Turkishness and identity, language and alphabet policies, constitutional debates, democracy, and human rights – "in accordance with the program expressed by İstiklâl Marşı."

In this section of the thesis, the texts published in the journal *Çelimli Çalım* were examined using the thematic analysis method to elucidate the intellectual structure of İMDER, which is shaped around the axes of history, nation, language, faith, and politics. During the thematic analysis process, not all articles under each theme were included; instead, considering the physical scope limitations of the study, exemplary texts that best represent the core layers of meaning of the relevant theme were selected for examination.

4.1. Alternative Readings of History

4.1.1. Ottoman Legitimacy and the Tanzimat Break

Çelimli Çalım approaches Türkiye's modernization not as a technical advancement but as an identity-erasing ideological transformation, resulting in a bundle of contradictions – "a body in the East with its head turned towards the West."³²¹ This perspective frames the historical break of modernization as the state's evolution from a *gaza* ideal to a "profit-oriented" structure.³²² Within the historical framework presented by *Çelimli Çalım*, the Ottoman Empire is defined as the last political order to resist the capitalist expansionism of the West. According to İsmet Özel, the Ottomans were not merely a classical Islamic state but the politicized form of "the ideal order sought since archaic times in Asia Minor."³²³ Its legitimacy was based on the sultan being "the strongest of the Gaza lords" and girding the political sword of Islam with the title "Guardian of the Two Holy Sanctuaries (Haremeyn)."

³²¹ Salih Gezgici, "Frenk Hikâyesinde Görülünce Menşevik, Umran Yolunda Olunurildi Bolşevik," *Çelimli Çalım*, no. 16 (Ekim 2015): 14.

³²² Küçükşakalak, "Devletin Tedavül Ettirdiği," *Çelimli Çalım*, no. 13 (Temmuz 2015): 2.

³²³ İsmet Özel, "Yeni Türkiye: Bir Cürm-i Meşhut," *Çelimli Çalım*, no. 7 (Ocak 2015): 21.

Özel attributes Ottoman power to its continuation of "the despotic state tradition of Byzantium" alongside its *gaza* ideology. The term "Turk" is used not as an ethnic designation but as a moral and political attribute, representing the position of the "*Millet-i Hâkime*" (Ruling Nation) characterized by "not paying tribute and crushing the infidel." The distinguishing feature of this order was its ability to establish a "lidded system" – one that was "neither open nor closed" – against the domination of Western capital and culture. This balance disrupted in the 19th century by the Tanzimat reforms, which initiated a process of internal integration into the capitalist system: "Capitalism first cracked open the lid of this order during the Tulip Era and flung it off completely with the Tanzimat. Just as the September 12, 1808 coup was necessary for the implementation of the January 24, 1809 decisions, the Tanzimat Edict was proclaimed to ensure the rapid and effective application of the 1838 Treaty of Balta Limanı."³²⁴ Following the Balta Limanı Treaty, indigenous production centers collapsed, and an asymmetric economic structure favoring non-Muslim capital emerged.³²⁵

However, *Çelimli Çalım*'s analysis suggests the Ottoman State was not an absolute Islamic state; it was a structure that failed to safeguard the interests of the Muslim populace and subjugated Islamic institutions to political interests.³²⁶ In this context, practices such as the Ottoman dismantling of popular-based Islamic organizations like *fütüvvet* and *ahîlik*, the post-Tanzimat transformation of commercial life in favor of non-Muslims, and the *devşirme* (child levy) system are presented as calling into question the state's claim of "*ilâ-yı kelimetullah*" (to exalt the word of God). It appears religious motivations were secondary in Ottoman expansion policies, with even mass conversion movements supported limitedly based on strategic concerns, such as the Islamization of the Bosnians to create "a potential force against the German threat." As expressed in the journal, "The Ottomans were considering the jizya they would collect in the Balkans, which they considered their

³²⁴ Ibid.

³²⁵ Oğuz Batıgün, "Ey Sermaye Geldiysen Masaya Üç Kere Vur!," *Çelimli Çalım*, no. 14 (Ağustos 2015): 18.

³²⁶ Gökhan Göbel, "Garantili Osmanlıcılık," *Çelimli Çalım*, no. 16 (Ekim 2015): 3.

homeland." This pragmatic rather than principled foundation is also evident in the class structure: "The overwhelming majority of others in the state administration consisted of *devşirmes*. The Islam of many *devşirmes* did not go beyond the rituals of their recruitment."³²⁷ These observations reveal that the Ottomans acted based on pragmatic politics and economic interests rather than strict Islamic principles.

This critical stance distinguishes the journal's perspective from the Ottoman romanticism prevalent in contemporary conservative circles, which it questions on both historical and symbolic planes. It argues that discourses sanctifying the Ottomans as a holistic "civilizational ideal" lead to an irrational position that wholly denies the Republic, while reactive circles that unconditionally defend the Republic and "see all the evils inflicted upon the Turkish nation during the Republican period as achievements of the Republic" are dragged into the same superficiality: "One group of people praises the Ottomans and condemns the Republic. The level of those defending the Republic against them is no higher."³²⁸

The discourse articulated through *Çelimli Çalım* frames modernization as a process set in motion by the abolition of the Janissary Corps in 1826, representing both the "liquidation of indigenous military and economic classes" and "the institutionalization of dependence on the West."³²⁹ The dissolution of the Janissary Corps was not simply military restructuring; it represented the deliberate dismantling of a socio-cultural formation that had emerged from within society itself, maintaining organic ties with guilds, neighborhood communities, and port workers. This event signifies the dissolution of the legitimacy bond between the nation and the state and the liquidation of the influence of the popular classes within the state. This process is characterized as "memory annihilation"; along with the corps, its symbols, tombstones, and traditional network of relations were also eradicated.³³⁰

During the Tanzimat period, statesmen caught between accusations of "infidelity" (*gâvurluk*) and Westernization attempted to legitimize

³²⁷ Ibid., 3-4.

³²⁸ Ibid., 3.

³²⁹ Mehmet Ali Yeşil, "Eyeri Kaltak Osmanlı," *Çelimli Çalım*, no. 17 (Kasım 2015): 32

³³⁰ Ibid., 33.

reforms by referencing their Islamic identities. However, this did not make them "characters in a Western narrative." The courage they showed in reforms revealed a type of Westernism shaped under economic pressures and foreign concessions.³³¹ This period, where the *Sunuf-ı Devlet ricali* (statesmen of the various classes of the state) remained silent to protect "the positions they occupied as individuals who monopolized religion and knowledge," witnessed the quests for a national economy by figures like Namık Kemal and Ali Suavi and efforts towards Islamic modernism. Attempts by names like Ziya Pasha and Ali Suavi to reconcile modernization with Islamism produced intellectual inconsistencies; it was argued that Westernism dragged the Ottomans away from their cultural foundation and towards an identitylessness that placed non-Muslim elements at the center.³³² Reforms carried out by figures like Mustafa Reşid Pasha within the framework of "secret agreements" and external borrowing were both criticized and continued by intellectuals. However, the discourse of "*kaht-ı rica*" (shortage of statesmen) that emerged post-Tanzimat symbolizes the exhaustion of expectations from Westernism.³³³

The Tanzimat reforms included institutional arrangements that facilitated the entry of Western capital into the Ottoman domestic market. Practices like the military exemption tax (*bedel-i askerî*) negated the equality claim of the Tanzimat, while Muslim elements were de facto excluded.³³⁴ The Tanzimat period is thus accepted as the beginning of transformations in language and identity that continued into the Republican era. The removal of the word "*gâvur*" (infidel) from public discourse is a significant example, interpreted as the suppression of the people's intuitive defense of identity, shaped through the "Turk-Infidel" dichotomy, which expressed not only a religious but also a political distinction.³³⁵

³³¹ Gezgiç, "Frenk Hikâyesinde Görülünce Menşevik, Umran Yolunda Olunverildi Bolşevik," 14.

³³² Ibid., 15.

³³³ Ibid., 16.

³³⁴ Seyfullah Köksal, "Ferman Sermayenin," *Çelimli Çalım*, no. 14 (Ağustos 2015): 28–29.

³³⁵ Gökhan Göbel, "Hüviyetini İspat Et!," *Çelimli Çalım*, no. 1 (Eylül 2014): 3.

In this historical reading, the Tanzimat is seen not as the actual turning point but as the result of the process that began with the liquidation of the Janissaries. Thus, *Çelimli Çalım* interprets modernization not as a progressive reform but as the liquidation of indigenous forces and the construction of a bureaucratic elite dependent on the West.³³⁶ The ambivalent structure that emerged in this process brought about a state that could neither fully Westernize nor preserve its Islamic essence; thus, modernization became the intellectual and structural basis of dissolution.

4.1.2. Sakarya Victory and Aftermath

In the narrative of *Çelimli Çalım* the expression of "İstiklâl Harbi" (the War of Independence) is deliberately used over alternatives like "Kurtuluş Savaşı" (the War of Liberation) or "Millî Mücadele" (National Struggle).³³⁷ This is not merely a stylistic choice but a profound ideological stance. By emphasizing that in the Qur'an and hadith the word "*mücâdele*" is employed in the sense of "verbal dispute," which carries a negative connotation, the use of İstiklâl Harbi is presented as the "correct" and "legitimate" designation both semantically and in religious context.³³⁸ According to Özel, "to prefer the term *Kurtuluş Savaşı* instead of İstiklâl Harbi is to remain indifferent to the sanctification of the blood that was shed."³³⁹

According to the journal, the Battle of Sakarya, won under the leadership of Marshal Fevzi Çakmak, is the most important part of the War of Independence, seen not only as a military victory but also as a revival of the *millî* will and the *İslamî-millî* spirit.³⁴⁰ While the

³³⁶ Yeşil, "Eyeri Kaltak Osmanlı," 36.

³³⁷ Yahya Çiftçi, "Millî Mücadele Türkçe mi?," *Çelimli Çalım*, no. 18 (Aralık 2015): 36.

³³⁸ Ibid.

³³⁹ İsmet Özel, "Kimsiniz? Kimlerin Arasındasınız? Canlı Bomba Dedikleri Bilhassa Sizin Düşmanınız Mı? Düşman Saydıklarınızı Gözünüzde Canlı Bomba Şeklinde Canlandırdığınız Oldu Mu? Hatırınıza Bir Zamanlar Bomba Gibiyim Deddiğiniz Gelirse Kendinizde Canlı Bomba Takati Bulma İhtimali Var Mı? İşinize Hangisi Geliyor: Bilmek Mi, Bilir Gibi Yapmak Mı, Yoksa Bilmez Görünmek Mi? Hiçbiri. Sizin İşiniz Bitik," *Çelimli Çalım*, no. 13 (Temmuz 2015): 24.

³⁴⁰ İsmet Özel, "Allah'a Kaçın; İstiklâl Marşı Ezberini Bozmayın," *Çelimli Çalım*, no. 11 (Mayıs 2015): 21

expectation of defeat was dominant before the battle, the spiritual power provided by İstiklâl Marşı is presented as the most important element of the victory.³⁴¹ However, it is claimed that after the victory, Ankara's policies changed, Islamic elements were sidelined, and cadres representing the *millî ruh* (national spirit) were liquidated.^{342 343} The surveillance of Mehmet Akif and the pressures on Fevzi Çakmak are interpreted as the "exclusion of the *millî ruh*."³⁴⁴ According to *Çelimli Çalım*, these actions represent a symbolic "shelving" and indicate that the spirit which brought the victory was distanced from state policies.³⁴⁵

Although the one-year period from Sakarya to the Great Offensive is defined as a "preparation period" in official history, in the journal, this period is portrayed as one in which Mustafa Kemal consolidated his authority through various maneuvers and conducted diplomatic negotiations with Western actors (Ankara-Athens-London line). In this context, it is implied that the Great Offensive was the result of a political compromise rather than a military strategy: "What is great? The offensive or the result some will get?"³⁴⁶ After the victory, Mustafa Kemal's petitioning TBMM to request the titles "*Gazi*" (Veteran) and "*Münci*" (Savior) is seen as a move to consolidate his legitimacy.³⁴⁷

This alternative narrative extends to the very origins and nature of the War of Independence. The articles depict it not as a single-centered, leader-focused process but as the product of multiple actors, based on the people, and of local resistance networks. Mustafa Kemal's role is described as more limited and even "faint" compared to its central position in official history.³⁴⁸ His failure to become the Minister of War after his return to Istanbul, the abolition of the Yıldırım Armies Group Command, and his search for contacts with British officials are cited to

³⁴¹ Ibid.

³⁴² Yahya Çiftçi, "Sivas'tan Mekke'ye Gitmek," *Çelimli Çalım*, no. 8 (Şubat 2015): 31

³⁴³ Yahya Çiftçi, "Sakarya Meydan Muharebesi Kimin Hatır(at)ında?," *Çelimli Çalım*, no. 2 (Ağustos 2014): 10.

³⁴⁴ Ibid.

³⁴⁵ Özel, "Allah'a Kaçın; İstiklâl Marşı Ezberini Bozmayın," 22.

³⁴⁶ Çiftçi, "Sakarya Meydan Muharebesi Kimin Hatır(at)ında?," 10.

³⁴⁷ Mehmet Ali Yeşil, "At Üstünde Nasıl Namaz Kılınır?," *Çelimli Çalım*, no. 11 (Mayıs 2015): 31.

³⁴⁸ Yahya Çiftçi, "Yakın Tarihe Uzak Durmalıyım," *Çelimli Çalım*, no. 4 (Ekim 2014): 19.

show that his transition to Anatolia was shaped by a diplomatic ground different from the official narrative.³⁴⁹ Even his participation in the Erzurum Congress was made possible with the support of Kazım Karabekir.³⁵⁰ *Çelimli Çalım* particularly emphasizes the issue of Mustafa Kemal and Kazım Karabekir's contacts with the British. Messages conveyed through Rawlinson indicate that the British were seeking cooperation with individuals in Türkiye who could be "influential, loyal, and genuine friends of Britain"; these contacts are especially evaluated in the context of the Erzurum Congress.³⁵¹

The beginning of the War of Independence is positioned completely differently from official history: The War is initiated with the Defense of Medina, and Fahrettin Pasha is seen as the first leader of the War of Independence, defined as the "last jihad."³⁵² The narrative about the support of the Indian Caliphate Committee for the War of Independence and the Islamic congresses in Sivas reinforces the "jihad" dimension of the war.³⁵³

This contestation of foundational myths culminates in a challenge to the official founding date of the Republic. *Çelimli Çalım* questions the official discourse, emphasizing instead that the true declaration of sovereignty occurred with the parliamentary decisions numbered 307 and 308 on 30–31 October 1922.³⁵⁴ These decisions stated that the caliphate belonged to the Ottoman dynasty (*Hanedan-ı Âli Osman*) and that the Turkish state constituted the seat of the Caliphate (*Makam-ı Hilafet*). According to this interpretation, had 1 November been chosen as the symbolic date, the emphasis on the caliphate would have come to the fore; therefore, 29 October was deliberately selected as the foundational date. From this perspective, the essential change that took place on 29 October 1923 was the replacement of the existing

³⁴⁹ Ibid.

³⁵⁰ Mustafa Deveci, "Hakimiyet Bila Kayd ü Şart Türk Milletininindir," *Çelimli Çalım*, no. 5 (Kasım 2014): 25.

³⁵¹ Yahya Çiftçi, "Kongre'yi 'Pact' Yapmak," *Çelimli Çalım*, no. 6 (Aralık 2014): 25.

³⁵² Durmuş Küçükşakalak, "Türk'ün Menbaı Medine," *Çelimli Çalım*, no. 10 (Nisan 2015): 2.

³⁵³ Yahya Çiftçi, "Sivas'tan Mekke'ye Gitmek," 30–31.

³⁵⁴ Mustafa Deveci, "Cumhuriyet Kurulmadı İlan Edildi," *Çelimli Çalım*, no. 4 (Ekim 2014): 9.

parliamentary government system with the office of the presidency, with Mustafa Kemal assuming this position. Thus, this date should be seen not as the "proclamation of the Republic" but rather as the "proclamation of the Presidency."³⁵⁵

4.1.3. Republican Reforms and Islam

Çelimli Çalım conceptualizes the reforms not as isolated policy changes, but as a process of historical intervention process that systematically liquidated the Islamic-*millî* identity of *Türk milleti*. This process is framed as a deliberate rupture initiated at Lausanne with the formula "Give your religion, take your homeland," while the Alphabet Reform, along with changes in the calendar and measurement units, is interpreted as the severing of the bond between Islamic concepts and everyday life.³⁵⁶

The discourse articulated in *Çelimli Çalım* argues that Islamic references permeating Ottoman – Turkish society – from units of weight and measure to the regulation of the calendar – lost their meaning with changes in alphabet and measurement systems. The abolition of units such as *dirhem*, *miskal*, *sa‘*, and *fersah* rendered not only the understanding of juridical rulings but also the preservation of cultural memory – jproverbs, idioms, and folk songs – impossible. Popular expressions like *İki dirhem bir çekirdek* or *Okka her yerde dört yüz dirhem*, as well as defiant sayings such as *Halep oradaysa arşın burada*, became contextless for new generations. This transformation is framed not merely as a cultural loss but as a colonialist maneuver that, by "removing *Türk millî hayatı* (Turkish national life) from the equation," opened the way for Western economic and cultural domination.³⁵⁷

The calendar change is also interpreted not as a technical adjustment but as an ideological reconstruction. The abandonment of the Hijri calendar and adoption of the Gregorian calendar meant operating by "the

³⁵⁵ Ibid.

³⁵⁶ Hacı Şahin, "Okka Altına Gitti Okka," *Çelimli Çalım*, no. 15 (Eylül 2015): 35.

³⁵⁷ Ibid.

calendar of the defeated in the War of Independence.”³⁵⁸ The designation of Saturday and Sunday as weekly rest days is evaluated as an acceptance of the West’s and the Judeo-Christian religious tradition’s conception of time. In this respect, the calendar and time measurement are seen as instruments of the West’s manner of dominating time.

In its critique, *Çelimli Çalım* further argues that even groups identifying as “Islamic movements” often failed to question the essence of these reforms. These movements, which accepted the Alphabet Reform as if it had “never happened,” are seen as seemingly oppositional but in fact reinforcing the reforms’ legitimacy.³⁵⁹ This is described as the continuity of a governing type that is “a friend to the state, but an enemy to the nation.”³⁶⁰ Even after the ban on the call to prayer (*ezan*) was lifted post-1960, the consolidation of the reforms – especially the preservation of the Alphabet Reform – is interpreted as another sign of this continuity.³⁶¹

Thus, the Republican reforms are presented not as progressive modernization but as a comprehensive project of de-Islamization and cultural colonization, fundamentally altering the nation’s relationship with its own history, identity, and faith.

4.1.4. Post-1960 Türkiye

The narrative of May 27, 1960, in *Çelimli Çalım* is presented not merely as another military coup but as the definitive liquidation of the *millî irade* (national will) that had begun to reassert itself politically since 1930. The experience of Free Republican Party (Serbest Cumhuriyet Fırkası) in 1930, which represented the populace’s attempt to reclaim its place in politics with its Islamic identity, was thwarted “not because it failed, but because of its potential for success.”³⁶² This hope, which grew with DP government elected by the “direct mandate of the people” in 1950, was

³⁵⁸ Gökhan Göbel, “Mevlîdin Miladı Yok,” *Çelimli Çalım*, no. 11 (Mayıs 2015): 3.

³⁵⁹ Küçükşakalak, “Sahte ‘Devlet Düşmanlığı’ndan Sahte ‘Millet Dostluğu’na,” *Çelimli Çalım*, no. 17 (Kasım 2015): 2.

³⁶⁰ Ibid.

³⁶¹ Gökhan Göbel, “Sermayesi Latin Harfleri Olanın Burnu Pislikten Kurtulmaz,” *Çelimli Çalım*, no. 14 (Ağustos 2015): 3.

³⁶² Seyfullah Köksal, “Serbest Millet Korkusu,” *Çelimli Çalım*, no. 17 (Kasım 2015): 15.

effectively liquidated by the 1960 coup, pushing segments of the populace with Islamic reflexes outside the system.^{363 364}

The coup is interpreted as the elimination of the "heroic army to which İstiklâl Marşı was dedicated."^{365 366 367} According to İsmet Özel, the claim that "the military stages a coup every ten years in Türkiye" is a lie; rather, the perpetrators were elements aligned with NATO and CENTO, serving the interests of "colonialist" powers. Thus, 27 May was "an assassination against *Türk milleti*" carried out by Western colonialists, not "our army."^{368 369 370 371 372 373} This intervention dismantled the possibility of independent development signaled by Menderes's attempts to establish economic relations with Arab countries, binding Türkiye's political will directly to external power centers thereafter.³⁷⁴ This process not only targeted the government but also liquidated the relatively independent structure of the civilian and military bureaucracy inherited from the Ottoman Empire, effectively ending the political order established after the War of Independence.^{375 376}

The political consequences were profound. The 1960 coup laid the groundwork for the emergence of Nationalist Movement Party (Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi, MHP) line. Turkish nationalists, in a "convalescence period," reemerged after May 27 as "American lambs in wolf's clothing," taking over Republican Villagers Nation Party (Cumhuriyetçi Köylü Millet Partisi) in 1965 and reconstructing

³⁶³ Özel, "Bir Milletin Ümidi Yoksa Kendisi de Yoktur," 20.

³⁶⁴ Gökhan Göbel, "Yeni Hindiyi Vatan Cephesindekiler Tahkik Edecek," *Çelimli Çalım*, no. 7 (Ocak 2015): 3.

³⁶⁵ Ibid.

³⁶⁶ Özel, "Allah'a Kaçın; İstiklâl Marşı Ezberini Bozmayın," 22.

³⁶⁷ D. Celalettin Kavas, "Türkiye Kaç Seçim Geçirdi-3," *Çelimli Çalım*, no. 3 (Eylül 2014): 20.

³⁶⁸ Özel, "Allah'a Kaçın; İstiklâl Marşı Ezberini Bozmayın," 22.

³⁶⁹ Göbel, "Sermayesi Latin Harfleri Olanın Burnu Pislikten Kurtulmaz," 3.

³⁷⁰ Göbel, "Yeni Hindiyi Vatan Cephesindekiler Tahkik Edecek," 3;

³⁷¹ Salih Gezgiç, "İşini Bilecek Memur, Darlığı Yenecek Sermaye," *Çelimli Çalım*, no. 17 (Kasım 2015): 17.

³⁷² Özel, "Allah'a Kaçın; İstiklâl Marşı Ezberini Bozmayın," 22.

³⁷³ Ibid.

³⁷⁴ Oğuz Batıgün, "Ortak Pazar ya da Baba Yarısı Sam Amca," *Çelimli Çalım*, no. 16 (Ekim 2015): 27.

³⁷⁵ Kavas, "Türkiye Kaç Seçim Geçirdi-3," 20.

³⁷⁶ Muammer Parlar, "İdareyi İdare Eden," *Çelimli Çalım*, no. 13 (Temmuz 2015): 12–14

nationalist politics with the "wolf" symbol in the 1969 elections.³⁷⁷ Özel characterizes the morning of May 27, 1960, as the moment "the people to whom the *Türk millet*i gave its mandate" were liquidated and the 1923 paradigm was abolished, creating a void and continuing a mental disconnect ongoing since the Tanzimat.³⁷⁸

The electoral success of Justice Party (Adalet Partisi, AP) in 1965 demonstrated that the 1960 intervention could not be fully legitimized. However, the memorandum of March 12, 1971, suppressed the initiative the people had begun to reclaim.³⁷⁹ It was within this framework that "political Islam" emerged, which the journal argues was not an organic response to popular religious demands but rather a mechanism engineered by the system to co-opt and control them.³⁸⁰ The rise of Milli Selamet Partisi (National Salvation Party, MSP) is seen as a result more of the need to redesign right-wing politics than of genuine Islamic sensitivities.³⁸¹ The influence of technocrats sent abroad through NATO and CENTO scholarships, operating through institutions like the State Planning Organization, enabled the MSP to organize as a channel extending to the provinces, further integrating these movements into the system's logic.³⁸² The 1973 elections were a turning point where this state-led orientation crystallized. The fact that Islamic-based propaganda during the election was later dismissed as a "joke" raises questions about the MSP's ideological depth.³⁸³ The journal concludes that everything political Islam said in the name of Islam was spoken "for administrative reasons"; in fact, "political Islam has no preparation regarding Islam." Its politics created "an atmosphere of Islamic expectation, foreign to Türkiye, for people to lose themselves, not to come to their senses." This line, continuing with the RP and subsequently

³⁷⁷ Faysal Toprak, "Türkçü Dükkanı," *Çelimli Çalım*, no. 17 (Kasım 2015): 11.

³⁷⁸ İsmet Özel, "Ebedi Yurdun Üzerinde Yurt Üstünde Ebediyen," *Çelimli Çalım*, no. 12 (Haziran 2015): 20.

³⁷⁹ Muammer Parlar, "Bir Siyasal İslam Hikayesi," *Çelimli Çalım*, no. 17 (Kasım 2015): 13.

³⁸⁰ Ibid.

³⁸¹ Ibid., 14.

³⁸² Gezgiç, "İşini Bilecek Memur, Darlığı Yenecek Sermaye," 17–18.

³⁸³ Parlar, "Bir Siyasal İslam Hikayesi," 14.

the AKP, has been characterized more by a strategy of “chasing after the masses” than by a substantive Islamic identity.³⁸⁴

This process of integration intensified economically with the neoliberal transformation beginning in the 1980s. The modernization process is interpreted not only as an ideological one but also as an economic process carried out through instruments such as bureaucracy, capital, and later the presidential system.^{385 386} From the Özal era onwards, the political influence of the MSP was assessed as interventions by technocratic cadres aimed both at establishing a market order and at neutralizing religious sensitivities within the system.³⁸⁷ After 1980, with the rapid proliferation of “autonomous” institutions and high-level boards, the liquidation of the *millî irade* was effectively completed; all these developments reinforced both economic transformation and political hegemony.³⁸⁸ In this way, the will of the *millet* was transferred to international oversight mechanisms.

In the 2000s, the emergence of the presidential system alongside discourses of “New Türkiye” and “New Constitution” is interpreted not as an expression of popular sovereignty, but as an attempt to produce a political form suited to the requirements of the global system.³⁸⁹ This broader orientation was reinforced by the role of capital groups and NGOs, described as “agents that undermine *millet hayatı*” which played an active role in shaping political orientations.³⁹⁰ NGOs, in particular, had come to function as “catalysts in the smooth operation of capital and the seamless transformation of society.”³⁹¹ By contrast, İMDER explicitly distinguished itself from such organizations, declaring it is “not an association among associations, let alone an NGO,” and pledging to

³⁸⁴ Ibid.

³⁸⁵ Küçükşakalak, “Devletin Tedavül Ettirdiği,” 2.

³⁸⁶ Parlar, “İdareyi İdare Eden,” 12–15.

³⁸⁷ Gezgic, “İşini Bilecek Memur, Darlığı Yenecek Sermaye,” 18–19.

³⁸⁸ Parlar, “İdareyi İdare Eden,” 12–14.

³⁸⁹ D. Celaleddin Kavas, “Sensin Bu Hayatın Eser-i Mihveri Sensin, Öldürse de Aşkın Beni Bir Ömre Bedelsin,” *Çelimli Çalım*, no. 17 (Kasım 2015): 12.

³⁹⁰ Durmuş Küçükşakalak, “Sahtekâr Dindarlara Sıfatsız Müslümanlık,” *Çelimli Çalım*, no. 4 (Ekim 2014): 2.

³⁹¹ Parlar, “Kendini Bulmuş Sermaye, Kendine Gelememiş Toplum,” *Çelimli Çalım*, no. 14 (Ağustos 2015): 11.

abolish them all "on the day when a path opens to do something good for Türkiye."³⁹²

The analytical approach connects this transformation to a broader debate on the state. The essential principle defining the state is "unity of purpose," and with its disappearance, the state effectively ceases to exist. *Çelimli Çalım* argues that the modern state has been incorporated into the capitalist system and transformed into a corporate structure, especially after World War I. Although Türkiye resisted this through its War of Independence, after 1960 it increasingly integrated into the capitalist system, becoming "a company, tied with all its organs to the capitalist system... providing coordination among corporations." This is interpreted as the final completion of the state's neoliberal integration and the transformation of the people's burden into "a tool of political manipulation."³⁹³

4.2. Turkishness and the Turkish Nation

4.2.1. Turkish Identity versus Capitalism

The critique of capitalism presented in *Çelimli Çalım* is foundational, framing it not merely as an economic model but as the core ideological and cultural apparatus of the modern world system, constituting a direct threat to Turkish-Islamic existence. Capitalism is depicted as a mechanism that distorts the essential structure of society, establishing a binding and restrictive order for humanity and acting as the most effective anchor in history, preventing humanity from engaging with its "true" idea.³⁹⁴ This critique targets the invisible hegemony capitalism acquired in the post-Cold War world. With the collapse of communism, issues such as workers' rights lost their significance, while capitalism, under the guise of "globalism," reshaped the world,³⁹⁵ pushing labor

³⁹² Küçükşakalak, "Sahtekâr Dindarlara Sıfatsız Müslümanlık," 2.

³⁹³ Küçükşakalak, "Devletin Tedavül Ettirdiği," 2.

³⁹⁴ Özcan Çam, "Müslümanların Müslümanlıkları Neyi İzah Ediyor." *Çelimli Çalım*, no. 3 (Eylül 2014): 15.

³⁹⁵ Mustafa Deveci, "Kadının Hakkı, Hakkın Kadını" *Çelimli Çalım*, no. 12 (Haziran 2015): 10.

struggles off the agenda and reducing the working class to a concern dealt with only by professional jurists.³⁹⁶

Historically, the journal argues capitalism reinvents itself through crises. The regimes that emerged between the two world wars (the Soviets, Fascist Italy, Nazi Germany, the Republic of Türkiye, the Franco regime) grew on the pre-Great Depression ground of capitalism.³⁹⁷ The most comprehensive of these periodic restorations occurred with the Bretton Woods system established after World War II.³⁹⁸ Through institutions like the IMF, the World Bank, and the World Trade Organization, capitalism was systematized on a global scale, reinforcing mechanisms of exploitation through core-periphery relations.³⁹⁹

İsmet Özel provides a geopolitical framework, stating that after World War I, the world was divided into three parts: Western-centered financial states (First World), the socialist bloc (Second World), and colonized geographies (Third World).⁴⁰⁰ However, Türkiye is presented as the only entity that "does not fit" into this scheme, a unique position derived from the fact that "Anatolia was turned into Dar al-Islam by the Turks."⁴⁰¹ Despite capitalist modernization projects, Türkiye is portrayed as managing to preserve its own line of existence.⁴⁰² From this perspective, attempts to reconcile capitalism with Islam and Turkish identity are subjected to serious criticism. For instance, the view of Prof. Dr. Sabahattin Zaim that "there is no Islamic economics, nor should there be" is rejected, with such attempts seen as among the great illusions of the modern age.⁴⁰³ Concepts such as Westernization, globalization, civilization, modernity, progress, and development are argued to all

³⁹⁶ Ibid.

³⁹⁷ Deveci, "Kadının Hakkı, Hakkın Kadını," 10.

³⁹⁸ Durmuş Küçükşakalak, "Mutabakatların Mübazeresi," *Çelimli Çalım*, no. 14 (Ağustos 2015): 2.

³⁹⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁰ İsmet Özel, "Yük II," *Çelimli Çalım*, no. 5 (Ekim 2014): 16-17.

⁴⁰¹ Ibid., 17.

⁴⁰² İsmet Özel, "Eşim Seni Sine Sine Süren Kim? Kimdir Şiir? Şair Onun Nesidir?," *Çelimli Çalım*, no. 17 (Kasım 2015): 21.

⁴⁰³ Ibid.

converge into a single paradigm: capitalism.⁴⁰⁴ ⁴⁰⁵ These concepts are used either as ideological makeup aimed at covering up capitalism⁴⁰⁶ or as "manifestations of the trouble of finding names for the different stages capitalism has gone through."⁴⁰⁷

Consequently, capitalism is explicitly condemned through stark theological language, referred to as "the order of unbelief (*küfür düzeni*)," "the nation of unbelief (*küfür milleti*)," and "the sovereignty of unbelief (*küfür hakimiyeti*)."⁴⁰⁸ ⁴⁰⁹ ⁴¹⁰ ⁴¹¹ It is argued that once "the conditions in which sovereignty rests with the *Türk milleti*" are established, the impositions carried out through democracy – understood as both a "discursive" and an "administrative" function of capitalism – will disappear, enabling the *Türk milleti* to act in accordance with its own identity.⁴¹²

This stance against the capitalist world system is framed as both an intellectual and metaphysical resistance, grounded on the special connection between Turkish identity and Islam. Özel argues that the entire academic community ignores that "Western civilization or just civilization" is "a result of the tendency to otherize the Turk"⁴¹³ and that what sustains capitalism in its most "abstract" form is anti-Turkish sentiment.⁴¹⁴ In this context, Turkish identity is positioned as the only subject possessing the cultural and spiritual equipment to resist capitalism.

The period after 1990 is defined as a "real disaster,"⁴¹⁵ where humanity became unable to produce alternatives to capitalism. Through

⁴⁰⁴ İsmet Özel, "Yüce Peygamberimize Kötü Söz Söylemeye Zinhar Kefere! Var Mı Bizim Bir Lâfımız Onlarınkine?," *Çelimli Çalım*, no. 8 (Şubat 2015): 21.

⁴⁰⁵ Küçükşakalak, "Mutabakatların Mübazeresi," 2.

⁴⁰⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁷ Özel, "Yüce Peygamberimize Kötü Söz Söylemeye Zinhar Kefere," 21.

⁴⁰⁸ Asaf Çelen, "Gökdelenler Ne İşe Yarar," *Çelimli Çalım*, no. 6 (Aralık 2014): 31.

⁴⁰⁹ D. Celaleddin Kavas, "Bu Şekil Demokrasi Şu Şekil Demokrasi," *Çelimli Çalım*, no. 13 (Temmuz 2015): 21.

⁴¹⁰ Küçükşakalak, "Mutabakatların Mübazeresi," 2.

⁴¹¹ Oruç Özel, "Burada Bir Camii Vardı: Millet-i Hakime'nin Yedi Tepesi," *Çelimli Çalım*, no. 14 (Ağustos 2015): 34.

⁴¹² Kavas, "Bu Şekil Demokrasi Şu Şekil Demokrasi," 21.

⁴¹³ Özel, "Yüce Peygamberimize Kötü Söz Söylemeye Zinhar Kefere!," 21.

⁴¹⁴ Ibid.

⁴¹⁵ Özel, "Yeni Türkiye: Bir Cürm-i Meşhut," 20.

the "end of history" thesis, the absoluteness of capitalism was declared, narrowing the field of ideological struggle⁴¹⁶ and paving the way for a new phase of domination presented as "globalization," which imposes the West's historical deviation on the entire world.⁴¹⁷ Özel defines the West as the normative central actor of global capitalism,⁴¹⁸ arguing that globalization is the ideological veil of capital's domination; it "reflects an aura that praises cultural diversity" because it benefits from it financially. This domination is legitimized by the West presenting its peculiar way of life as a universal norm. Within this comprehensive critique, language is posited as a crucial field of resistance that "financial power, no matter what, cannot penetrate." The argument is that if "the words we use represent us and we can draw strength from words," then we can acquire the "unshakable consciousness" needed regarding "the area that belongs to us."⁴¹⁹ ⁴²⁰ Thus, the struggle against global capitalism is intrinsically tied to the preservation of a language and consciousness rooted in a Turkish-Islamic ontology.

4.2.2. "Vav'lı Türk" versus "Kalın Türk"

The understanding of Turkishness presented in the *Çelimli Çalım* is based not on ethnic or biological origin, but on a character anchored by faith and willing to "confront the infidel" when necessary.⁴²¹ ⁴²² This conceptualization is constructed through a critical engagement with history, a distinction from Ottomanism, and a vehement rejection of the secular-nationalist identity engineering of the Republican era.

The historical and symbolic roots of this approach are traced to the early Islamic period. A key reference point is the Expedition of Tabuk, where a clear distinction emerged between those Muslims who participated, "daring to confront the infidel," and those who held back.

⁴¹⁶ Özel, "Eşim Seni Sine Sine Süren Kim? Kimdir Şiir? Şair Onun Nesidir?," 21.

⁴¹⁷ Özel, "Yük II," no. 5 (Ekim 2014): 16.

⁴¹⁸ Özel, "Yük II," no. 4 (Eylül 2014): 13.

⁴¹⁹ Ibid.

⁴²⁰ Özel, "Yük II," no. 5, 17.

⁴²¹ Halit Çete, "Misak-ı Milli ve Türkiye'nin (Kürt) Medreseleri," *Çelimli Çalım*, no. 10 (Nisan 2015): 23.

⁴²² Özel, "Çelimli Çalım'ın Hitamı," arka kapak.

The Prophet's order to demolish the mosque built by those who did not participate symbolizes the sharp line between faith and *nifaa* (religious hypocrisy). In this historical reading, this stance demonstrated by the Muslims at Tabuk "emerged as Turkish identity" and symbolizes the distinction between *nifaa* and faith.⁴²³ This is reinforced by the external labeling of communities fighting in the name of Islam in the pre-Ottoman ghazi principalities as "Turks," shaping Turkishness both as an external definition and identifying it with the political and military agency of Islam.⁴²⁴ Another historical reference is the Battle of Haçova, where the victory was brought about by the intervention of elements representing the *millet*—such as "cooks, muleteers, camel drivers, grooms." This event is referred to as the "ontological threshold where the *millet* establishes the state."⁴²⁵ This understanding emphasizes that the *millet* assumed Islamic responsibility despite the state, a line seen as continuing into the War of Independence where the *Türk millet*i guided the state.⁴²⁶ This historical continuity is updated through commitment to jihad and non-compromise with the infidel: Turks are Muslims who "do not heed the infidel's word and whose word prevails over the infidel."⁴²⁷

In *Çelimli Çalım*, Turkishness is constructed as a "creedal attitude" (*itikadî tavır*) aligned with the Hanafi-Sunni line. The struggle with the Safavids demonstrates that Turkishness assumed a position of resistance not only against external threats but also against internal deviations—since Shi'ism is regarded as a deviation.⁴²⁸ In this context, Turkishness diverges from modern ethnic definitions and becomes the name of a religious, moral, and political mobilization. "To choose to be Turkish is to be cleansed of every kind of tribalist filth."⁴²⁹ It is defined not merely as

⁴²³ Muammer Parlar, "Türkün Dünü Türkün Bugünü ya da Türkün Eni Türkün Boyu," *Çelimli Çalım*, no. 16 (Ekim 2015): 13.

⁴²⁴ Ibid.

⁴²⁵ Seyfullah Köksal, "Kafir Kaçtı," *Çelimli Çalım*, no. 14 (Ekim 2015): 28.

⁴²⁶ Lütfi Özeydin, "Türkiye ve İstiklâl Marşı Vesiletü'n-Necat'tan Hâsıl ve Kamusu Üç İhlas Bir Fatiha'dan," *Çelimli Çalım*, no. 11 (Mayıs 2015): 5.

⁴²⁷ Parlar, "Türkün Dünü Türkün Bugünü," 13.

⁴²⁸ Muammer Parlar, "İslam'ın Savaş Gücünün İslam'la Savaşan Güçle İmtihanı," *Çelimli Çalım*, no. 18 (Aralık 2015): 15–16.

⁴²⁹ Özel, "Kimsiniz? Kimlerin Arasındasınız?," 23.

belonging, but also through intellectual independence, moral resistance, and a consciousness of memory.⁴³⁰

This conception stands in sharp contrast to the journal's view of the Ottoman Empire, which is presented as a tradition that systematically suppressed Turkishness. The Ottomans deliberately kept Turkification weak in the Balkans, which they chose as their homeland, creating a "Balkan Islam" dependent on the palace. Nevertheless, in the Balkans, "those who took Islam seriously" became Turkified.⁴³¹ The post-Tanzimat understanding of egalitarian citizenship dissolved the Islamic structure of Ottoman society; while the social status of Muslims, the "ruling nation" (*millet-i hakime*), weakened, regulations governing non-Muslims were abolished.⁴³² Furthermore, against non-Muslims who grew financially stronger, Muslim elements lost their political privileges and declined financially. During this process, Ottomanism, an artificial identity "given by the state," found no resonance among the people and caused discomfort among both non-Muslim and Muslim elements, leading Turkish identity to evolve into a new quest.⁴³³

The loss of the Balkans caused a significant rupture regarding "Turkish identity." In the pages of *Çelimli Çalım*, the occupation of Istanbul by the Action Army (Hareket Ordusu), described as "a Jewish army in both its structure and organization," created the psychological threshold that ended Turkish dominance in the Balkans: "What gave the Christian Balkan peoples, who had been under Turkish domination for centuries, the courage to fight was the Action Army that occupied Istanbul due to the 31 March Incident."⁴³⁴ The Muslim massacres and migration that followed strengthened the consciousness in the search for Turkish identity.⁴³⁵

The discourse articulated in the journal presents a sharply critical position regarding modern Turkism, which it sees not as an indigenous development but as a foreign-originated, secular, and imported ideology.

⁴³⁰ Ibid.

⁴³¹ Durmuş Küçükşakalak, "Kara Donluların Borcu," *Çelimli Çalım*, no. 6 (Aralık 2014): 2.

⁴³² Deveci, "Hakimiyet Bila Kayd ü Şart Türk Milletininindir," 26.

⁴³³ Ibid.

⁴³⁴ Küçükşakalak, "Kara Donluların Borcu," 2.

⁴³⁵ Ibid.

According to this view, the origins of Turkism were formed in Tsarist Russia and Hungary and brought to the Ottoman Empire by the Committee of Union and Progress, a transfer determined by the political needs of the era rather than a solid cultural ground.⁴³⁶ This analysis posits that in the Republican era, this imported ideology was reinforced with a secular understanding of citizenship,⁴³⁷ decisively shaped by the formula "You shall not be a Pan-Islamist, Pan-Turkist, Bolshevik" imposed through external pressures and state policies. During this period, the concept of "*millet*" was stripped of Islamic references and defined by geographical and legal boundaries.⁴³⁸

At the center of this criticism lies the concept of the "Vav Turk" (*Vav'lı Türk*). This expression has both linguistic/orthographic and ideological dimensions. Orthographically, since the sound "ö" does not exist in Arabic, the word "Türk" was historically written with the letters "te-re-kaf" (ت ر ك).⁴³⁹ The pronunciation "Türk," which became widespread from 1071 onwards, "expresses a stance, a character, and an ethics."⁴⁴⁰ The "Vav Turk" emerges by adding the letter *vav* (و) to the word, allowing it to be pronounced as "Törk."⁴⁴¹ *Çelimli Çalım* sees this spelling as a conscious choice: "Writing 'Türk' with a 'vav' facilitates separating identity from Islam and constructing a Central Asia-centered historical narrative by saying 'Türk' or 'Törk' as needed."⁴⁴² One of the first examples is Necip Âsım, who was sarcastically called "Vav'lı Türk" for being the first to write the word with a *vav*.⁴⁴³ In the *Çelimli Çalım*'s discourse, the "Turks with Vav" became "acceptable" (*makbul*) persons as supporters of the post-Constitutional Turkism movement and the

⁴³⁶ Toprak, "Türkçü Dükkanı," 10–11.

⁴³⁷ Seyfullah Köksal, "Türk Tarih Tezi: 'Tarihten Önce Vardık, Tarihten Sonra Varız! Tarihte Yokuz!'," *Çelimli Çalım*, no. 18 (Aralık 2015): 30–31.

⁴³⁸ Ibid.

⁴³⁹ Durmuş Küçükşakalak, "Vavlı Gavurluğun Mimli Tarihi," *Çelimli Çalım*, no. 18 (Aralık 2015): 3.

⁴⁴⁰ Özel, "Kimsiniz? Kimlerin Arasındasınız?," 24.

⁴⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴⁴² Küçükşakalak, "Vavlı Gavurluğun Mimli Tarihi," 3.

⁴⁴³ Gökhan Göbel, "Vav'lı Emancipation versus Kalın Türk," *Çelimli Çalım*, no. 18 (Aralık 2015): 3.

alphabet reform, making the use of *vav* an ideological signifier, not merely phonetic.⁴⁴⁴

The concept is also a critique of an identity understanding content with a superficial definition of citizenship and disconnected from Islamic ties. The critique suggests those who think like this are "somehow 'with vav' no matter what view they hold" and that the "Turkists" themselves served most in establishing confusing definitions of the Turk.⁴⁴⁵

In response, *Çelimli Çalım* puts forward the concept of the "Thick Turk" (*Kalın Türk*). This is the Turk integrated with Islam, who performs jihad, and who takes his name and understanding of justice from Qur'an.⁴⁴⁶ The journal emphasizes that "refined" or "with vav" Turks cannot perform jihad, symbolizing a metaphorical "thickness" that denotes firmness in both belief and character.⁴⁴⁷ This ideological purity is also seen in *İstiklâl Marşı* itself. The absence of the word "Türk" in the Anthem is viewed positively by the association; because had the word been included, it would have been written with a "vav" according to the convention of the time. The omission is interpreted here as Mehmed Akif's conscious choice to preserve ideological purity, knowing that "Türk" should not be written with a "vav."⁴⁴⁸

The critique is further extended to the use of historical sources, viewing the Western interpretation of the Orkhon Inscriptions as an instrumentalized process to construct a notion of Turkishness stripped of Islam.⁴⁴⁹ It claims that Shamanism, Manichaeism, Sky God beliefs, and narratives of "Jewish Khazar Turks" were used to legitimize the understanding of "religion separate, nation separate"—an approach found contrary to the ideal of the "heroic race" (*kahraman ırk*) in *İstiklâl Marşı*.^{450 451} Furthermore, the journal claims that post-1960 Turkist

⁴⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁵ Toprak, "Vav'lı Türk'ün Kuyruğuna Yapışanlar," 7.

⁴⁴⁶ Lütfi Özeydin, "Adımız da Bizi İslam'dan Ayırmaya Mânidir, Kelimelerimiz de," *Çelimli Çalım*, no. 18 (Aralık 2015): 7.

⁴⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁸ İsmet Özel, "İşlem Tamamlandı, Neticesi Sıfır Putları Kırık, Çanları Susturduk, Sonra?," *Çelimli Çalım*, no. 18 (Aralık 2015): 20.

⁴⁴⁹ Köksal, "Türk Tarih Tezi: 'Tarihten Önce Vardık, Tarihten Sonra Varız!'," 31.

⁴⁵⁰ Küçükşakalak, "Vavlı Gavurluğun Mimli Tarihi," 2–3.

⁴⁵¹ Toprak, "Vav'lı Türk'ün Kuyruğuna Yapışanlar," 7.

movements were restructured in alignment with American policies, becoming a "hollowed-out tribalism" (*içi boşaltılmış kavmiyetçilik*) reduced to the discourse of "those who eat the rent of appearing Turkish."⁴⁵²

In conclusion, the discourse of the İMDER constructs an alternative understanding of identity through historical origin, language/alphabet use, ideological orientation, and religious references. The concept of the "Vav Turk" is framed not merely as a linguistic issue but as a symbolic indicator of secular nationalism. The "Thick Turk" developed in response is a model integrated with Islam, defining its perception of history and identity through religious references. Thus, the *Çelimli Çalım* reframes the definition of Turkishness from an ideological position that centers Islam, in opposition to both Ottoman and Republican era practices.

4.3. Democracy and Human Rights

The discourse in *Çelimli Çalım* presents a fundamental critique of liberal democracy, framing it not as an organic system of popular sovereignty but as a sophisticated instrument of Western-centric global hegemony. This critique seamlessly integrates an analysis of human rights rhetoric with a historical examination of Türkiye's electoral mechanics, arguing that together they form an apparatus designed to control and manipulate, rather than express, *milli irade*.

According to the journal's narrative, European democracies emerged from the struggles to replace the "old regimes" dismantled by capitalism. Although formally presented as regimes open to popular participation and oversight, they in reality provide the necessary structural cover for dominant powers to conduct their affairs more securely.⁴⁵³ Türkiye's adoption of democracy is thus interpreted as the importation of abstract molds without undergoing the requisite historical transformations experienced by Western societies, resulting in a system where the

⁴⁵² Toprak, "Türkçü Dükkanı," 11.

⁴⁵³ Kavas, "Bu Şekil Demokrasi Şu Şekil Demokrasi," 20.

popular will is not directly determinant but carefully managed.⁴⁵⁴ This imported system is seen as a key component of Türkiye's assigned role within the international order, a role that became particularly evident after 1945 when the center of the global system shifted from London to Wall Street, transforming international power balances and political demands.⁴⁵⁵ In this new US-dominated order, multi-party political structures were encouraged across all regions under American influence, and Türkiye's transition to multi-party life in 1946 is framed as a direct reflection of this external geopolitical shift.⁴⁵⁶ The subsequent emergence of DP is characterized not as a genuine popular movement but as a "controlled opposition" allowed to operate on the strict condition that it did not fundamentally harm the ruling party, CHP or the system it guarded.⁴⁵⁷

The symbolic potential of the electoral process, however, occasionally threatened to overflow these imposed constraints. The 14 May 1950 election is highlighted not for its technical results but for its profound symbolic meaning: "*Türk milleti* did not choose the Democrat Party, it chose İstiklâl Marşı."⁴⁵⁸ The spontaneous recitation of the call to *ezan* in its original Arabic on election night is interpreted as a powerful, identity-laden declaration by the people through the ballot box. Yet, when this identity declaration pushed against the boundaries of the system, bureaucratic and military reflexes were activated. İsmet İnönü's alleged statement to Menderes, "Not even I can save you!" is relayed as a stark indicator of the fundamental conflict between the will of the *millet* and the consent required by the systemic order.⁴⁵⁹ Similarly, the closure of the Millet Partisi (Nation Party) is presented as evidence that Islamic demands could find no legitimate place within this engineered political landscape. The ultimate rupture in this process was the 27 May 1960

⁴⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁵ Özel, "Bir Milletin Ümidi Yoksa Kendisi de Yoktur," 20.

⁴⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁷ D. Celaleddin Kavas, "Türkiye Kaç Seçim Geçirdi-1," *Çelimli Çalım*, no. 1 (Temmuz 2014): 6.

⁴⁵⁸ D. Celaleddin Kavas, "Türkiye Kaç Seçim Geçirdi-2," *Çelimli Çalım*, no. 2 (Ağustos 2014): 20-21

⁴⁵⁹ Ibid., 21.

military coup, characterized not merely as a change of government but as a "regime reset" that definitively closed the symbolic space opened in 1950. Electoral engineering continued thereafter; for instance, the national remainder system that allowed the leftist TİP to enter parliament in 1965 was replaced by the less proportional D'Hondt system in 1969, constraining its representation and demonstrating how the ballot box was transformed into a showcase that prioritized the security of the system over the authentic will of the *millet*.⁴⁶⁰

The journal further argues that election results are routinely instrumentalized by political actors to retroactively legitimize their own agendas and manipulate the perceived will of the *millet*.⁴⁶¹ A prime example cited is the "New Türkiye" discourse that emerged following the 2014 Presidential election. The journal notes that issues never raised during the election campaign, such as the claim that "The people have made their choice in favor of a new constitution," were presented post-election as the "conscious choice of the *millet*" This strategic reinterpretation of electoral outcomes reveals the potential of democratic mechanisms to distort, rather than transmit, the popular will.⁴⁶²

This critique of electoral politics is underpinned by a deeper philosophical rejection of the core tenets of democratic liberalism. The decline of right-left ideologies post-Cold War is seen as the moment when concepts like democracy and human rights were finally imposed as unchallengeable universal values by the West.⁴⁶³ In İsmet Özel's striking formulation, "In the unipolar 21st Christian century, the unchallenged Pharaoh was imposing three things: market economy, human rights, democracy."⁴⁶⁴ The widespread adoption of these concepts by diverse ideological groups in Türkiye is thus interpreted not as an endorsement of popular sovereignty but as a pragmatic desire to remain within the sphere of legitimacy defined by the dominant global

⁴⁶⁰ Kavas, "Türkiye Kaç Seçim Geçirdi-3," 20.

⁴⁶¹ Mustafa Deveci, "Bir Vatansızlaştırma Teklifi Olarak Yeni Türkiye," *Çelimli Çalım*, no. 3 (Eylül 2014): 6-7.

⁴⁶² Ibid., 6.

⁴⁶³ Özel, "Yeni Türkiye: Bir Cürm-i Meşhut," 20.

⁴⁶⁴ Ibid.

system.⁴⁶⁵ Democracy, in this view, is a structure for guiding and controlling the populace, not for enabling them to determine their own destiny.⁴⁶⁶

The concept of human rights receives a parallel and equally forceful critique, being identified as an ideological instrument of the Western-centric secular order. The 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights is evaluated not as a universal standard but as a text crafted in alignment with the interests of Jewish capital and American hegemony.⁴⁶⁷ The journal contends that the ostensibly universal term "everyone" within the Declaration functionally excludes Muslims and non-Western societies, applying only to a specific Western individualist archetype. This critical perspective is reinforced by observations from Türkiye's own constitutional debates, where the discourse of human rights was noted to have attained a sacrosanct status, to the extent that some political actors attempted to reinterpret the Islamic *Veda Hutbesi* (Farewell Sermon) through its lens.⁴⁶⁸ For *Çelimli Çalım*, this signifies the successful hegemony of a foreign normative framework over indigenous Islamic references.

In conclusion, the analysis in *Çelimli Çalım* synthesizes the critique of democracy, human rights, and electoral politics into a coherent whole. It portrays them as interconnected components of a hegemonic project that masks external domination under the guise of universal values and popular participation. The historical narrative of Türkiye's multi-party period is presented as a case study in how a *milli irade*, momentarily expressed in 1950, was systematically liquidated through military interventions and sophisticated legal-institutional engineering, ensuring that the political field remained a stage for managing consent rather than a forum for authentic national sovereignty.

⁴⁶⁵ Faysal Toprak, "Demokrasinin Gölgesinde Kim Bilir Belki Yarın," *Çelimli Çalım*, no. 13 (Temmuz 2015): 10.

⁴⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁷ Mustafa Deveci, "Yemeyiz, Reddediyoruz!," *Çelimli Çalım*, no. 14 (Ağustos 2015): 10.

⁴⁶⁸ Ibid.

4.4. "New Türkiye" Discourse and Constitutional Transformation

The discourse of the "New Türkiye" (*Yeni Türkiye*), as analyzed in *Çelimli Çalım*, is not a novel phenomenon unique to the AKP era but is presented as the latest iteration of a long-term project of modernization and integration into the global capitalist system, extending back to the Tanzimat reforms.⁴⁶⁹ ⁴⁷⁰ This project is characterized by identity liquidation, an epistemic break, and historical rupture, aiming to weaken Muslim-Turkish identity and bring about "denationalization."⁴⁷¹ ⁴⁷² ⁴⁷³ The journal evaluates this discourse as a structural project manifesting across numerous areas, from the Alphabet Revolution to constitutional language transformation, the restitution of properties to non-Muslim foundations, and the "solution process" regarding the Kurdish issue.⁴⁷⁴ ⁴⁷⁵ ⁴⁷⁶

The concept itself is not new; historical examples include "New Türkiye Party" established in 1961 and 2002, and Graham Fuller's 2007 book *The New Turkish Republic*, indicating its historical continuity and global reverberations.⁴⁷⁷ According to İsmet Özel, the "New Türkiye" is an imposition by imperial actors, a "slogan to conceal a fault," whose ultimate outcome risks the "Lebanonization" of Türkiye – a state with formal symbols of sovereignty (flag, borders, parliament) that express no reality belonging to itself, its political independence rendered impossible by the *de facto* dominance of the American financial

⁴⁶⁹ Durmuş Küçükşakalak, "Yeni Olmasına Yeni Lakin Kart," *Çelimli Çalım*, no. 7 (Ocak 2015): 2.

⁴⁷⁰ Yahya Çiftçi, "Yeni Türkiye'nin Temelleri," *Çelimli Çalım*, no. 3 (Eylül 2014): 4.

⁴⁷¹ Deveci, "Bir Vatansızlaştırma Teklifi Olarak Yeni Türkiye," 6–7.

⁴⁷² Küçükşakalak, "Yeni Olmasına Yeni Lakin Kart," 2–3.

⁴⁷³ Özel, "Yeni Türkiye: Bir Cürm-i Meşhut." 19–21.

⁴⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁵ Ayhan Gömürlü, "Darü'l-Türk," *Çelimli Çalım*, no. 13 (Temmuz 2015): 14.

⁴⁷⁶ Çam, "Müslümanların Müslümanlıkları Neyi İzah Ediyor," 15

⁴⁷⁷ Küçükşakalak, "Yeni Olmasına Yeni Lakin Kart," 2.

system.⁴⁷⁸ ⁴⁷⁹ Özel contends that even the use of this concept should be considered a crime.⁴⁸⁰

This transformation is deeply tied to a reconstitution of sovereignty, both in its conceptual meaning and its symbolic representation. The journal provides a cultural and linguistic analysis of how the concept of sovereignty has been transformed through constitutional texts. The change of the phrase "*Hakimiyet bila kayd ü şart milletindir*" (Sovereignty belongs without condition or restriction to the *millet*) in the 1921 and 1924 Constitutions to "*Egemenlik kayıtsız şartsız milletindir*" (Sovereignty belongs unconditionally to the *millet*) after 1945, and finally to "*Egemenlik kayıtsız şartsız Türk Milletininindir*" in the 1961 Constitution, signifies not merely linguistic simplification but a profound loss of meaning and an ideological shift. The journal argues that the word "*egemenlik*" is derived from the Greek "hegemony" and was imposed on Turkish political culture from outside, whereas "*hakimiyet*" is connected to "*hikmet*" (wisdom) and resides within an Islamic-political semantic field. Similarly, the substitution of "*millet*" with "*ulus*" is evaluated as a non-Islamic intervention.⁴⁸¹

This conceptual erosion was mirrored symbolically. The verse from Surah Ash-Shura placed on the wall of the first assembly in 1920 was gradually removed. In 1925, it was replaced by "*Hakimiyet milletindir*," which was later written in Latin alphabet after 1928, and finally changed to "*Egemenlik kayıtsız şartsız milletindir*" with the 1961 Constitution. This visual transformation is presented as a striking example of the institutional erasure of Islamic references and a symbolic indicator of the gradual alienation of sovereignty from the *millet*.⁴⁸² The debate over the very term "constitution" is also critical. The journal emphasizes that the word "*anayasa*," coined in 1945 as part of the "pure Turkish" movement, is not an exact equivalent of "*Teşkilât-ı Esasiye*" (Basic Organization).

⁴⁷⁸ İsmet Özel, "İstiklâl Harbi Bitti Diyenler Tasfiye Edilmeli!," *Çelimli Çalım*, no. 3 (Eylül 2014): 14.

⁴⁷⁹ Ibid., 13.

⁴⁸⁰ İsmet Özel, "Kim Takar Şairi? Kimmiş Bakiym Yeni Türkiye Cürmüne Şahitlik Eden?," *Çelimli Çalım*, no. 10 (Nisan 2015): 20.

⁴⁸¹ Deveci, "Hakimiyet Bila Kayd ü Şart Türk Milletininindir," 25-27.

⁴⁸² Ibid., 25.

The Ottoman "*Kanûn-ı Esâsî*" referred to rules set by the sultan outside *sharî'a*, and the adoption of *Teşkilât-ı Esasiye* during the War of Independence was a declaration of new political principles free from these connotations. The return to the "fabricated language" of "*anayasa*" with the 1961 Constitution is highlighted as a rupture within the society's system of references.⁴⁸³

Çelimli Çalım approaches these constitutional texts not as neutral, normative documents but as reflections of power relations and instruments of ideological hegemony for the modern world system.⁴⁸⁴ The validity of a constitution is argued to be determined less by its content and more by the political and historical context surrounding it. Hans Kelsen's "pure theory of law" and his "Grundnorm" (basic norm) theory are evaluated as ideological constructs disconnected from reality, designed to abstract law from politics and historicity. Constitutional jurisdiction, institutionalized in Türkiye with the 1961 Constitution, is asserted to be an instrument of intervention for international power centers, monitoring the nation-state's legitimacy in the eyes of external powers.⁴⁸⁵

This perspective is reinforced by Carl Schmitt's definition of sovereignty as "he who decides on the exception," which exposes the fragility of the constitutional order and the normalization of the state of exception.⁴⁸⁶ Within this framework, the military interventions of 1960 and 1980 are positioned not as violations of the constitutional order but as the very constituent actors of that order. The 1961 and 1982 Constitutions are characterized as "a document attesting that the Republic of Türkiye has been abolished since May 27, 1960," with their constituent will being the "established order" (*müesses nizam*) itself. Thus, the constitution becomes not a social contract but a "declaration of sovereignty established through intelligence and military means." The

⁴⁸³ Gökhan Göbel, "Yaşar Ne Yaşar Ne Yaşamaz," *Çelimli Çalım*, no. 9 (Mart 2015): 3.

⁴⁸⁴ D. Celaleddin Kavas, "Dünya Sistemiyle Ne Hukukumuz Var?," *Çelimli Çalım*, no. 10 (Nisan 2015): 31.

⁴⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁸⁶ Carl Schmitt, *Siyasal İlahiyat*, trans. Emre Zeybekoğlu (Ankara: Dost Kitabevi, 2005), 11, cited in D. Celaleddin Kavas, "Dünya Sistemiyle Ne Hukukumuz Var?," *Çelimli Çalım*, no. 10 (April 2015): 31.

historical purpose of the American Constitution in protecting the interests of the capitalist class demonstrates that constitutions are ultimately financial texts, and modern constitutionalism is an apparatus of hegemony, not a construction of law.⁴⁸⁷

The debates on the presidential system are situated within this critique of constituent power and external hegemony. The journal interprets the presidential system, alongside new constitutional initiatives, as elements of a project to turn Türkiye into "a US state" through the means of "political Islam," which rose in Türkiye and other Muslim countries under US influence post-World War II.^{488 489} It is argued that in the US, the presidential system is shaped by capital groups and lobbies, and the people effectively become representatives of these power centers. The system is presented not as a universal "separation of powers" but as an administrative tool of US hegemony, deliberately established in its sphere of influence in Central/South America and Africa.^{490 491} The journal posits a global hierarchy where the parliamentary system is for "first-rate" countries, the semi-presidential for "middle-level," and the presidential for "second-rate" countries, implying Türkiye's intended downgrade within this international power dynamic.⁴⁹² This perspective views the presidential system as a current manifestation of historical attempts to "expel the Turks from history" (*tard etme*).⁴⁹³

The origins of this debate in Türkiye are traced back to the 1970s, with the idea first appearing in the party programs of the National Order Party (Milli Nizam Partisi, MNP) and the MSP, which are described as "champions of exploiting the maneuvering space offered by being identified as Muslim."⁴⁹⁴ A historical continuity is drawn between the

⁴⁸⁷ Özcan Çam, "Dişlek Anayasa versus Tek Dişli Canavar," *Çelimli Çalım*, no. 9 (Mart 2015): 29.

⁴⁸⁸ Küçükşakalak, "Sahte 'Devlet Düşmanlığı'ndan Sahte 'Millet Dostluğu'na," 2.

⁴⁸⁹ Küçükşakalak, "Yamayasa," 2.

⁴⁹⁰ Kavas, "Bu Şekil Demokrasi Şu Şekil Demokrasi," 20.

⁴⁹¹ Kavas, "Sensin Bu Hayatın Eser-i Mihveri Sensin, Öldürse de Aşkın Beni Bir Ömre Bedelsin," 12.

⁴⁹² Ibid.

⁴⁹³ Özel, "Allah'a Kaçın; İstiklâl Marşı Ezberini Bozmayın," 20.

⁴⁹⁴ Küçükşakalak, "Yamayasa," 2.

proclamation of the Republic on October 29, 1923 – interpreted not as the "proclamation of the Republic" but the "proclamation of the Presidency" that replaced the parliamentary system – and the current imposition of the presidential system.⁴⁹⁵ Post-1960 institutions like the senate and the constitutional court served as a "lock" on the *milli irade*, a structure later reinforced with "autonomous" superior boards, completing the process of transferring the *milli irade* to international monitoring mechanisms.⁴⁹⁶

In conclusion, *Çelimli Çalım* frames the "New Türkiye" discourse and its accompanying constitutional and presidential proposals as the culmination of a long historical process aimed at fully integrating Türkiye into the global capitalist order. This process involves a fundamental redefinition of sovereignty away from its Islamic and national foundations ("*hakimiyet*" and "*millet*") towards a secular, externally-legitimated model ("*egemenlik*" and "*ulus*"), ultimately seeking to replace popular will with a managerial system overseen by international capital and its local intermediaries.

4.5. Islamic Movements and the Palestine Issue

Çelimli Çalım articulates a pointed critique of modern Islamist movements, framing their development not as an organic, faith-based awakening but as a project shaped by and ultimately serving Western imperial interests. This critique logically extends to the popular focus on the Palestinian issue, which the journal views as a strategic diversion from Türkiye's *millî* and Islamic priorities.

The journal questions the very origins of modern Islamist movements, arguing they were constructed under foreign influence. A central example is the Muslim Brotherhood (*İhvan-ı Müslimin*), characterized not as a religious revival movement but as a structure shaped under British control, incorporating Sufi, Salafi, and economic

⁴⁹⁵ Deveci, "Cumhuriyet Kurulmadı İlan Edildi," 8–9.

⁴⁹⁶ Ibid., 9.

elements.⁴⁹⁷ The movement's founder, Hasan al-Banna's assessment of the Turks' long experience of Islamic rule as a source of corruption is presented as a significant indicator of an Arab-centric and anti-Turkish political consciousness embedded within the Brotherhood from its inception.⁴⁹⁸ This assessment opens the door to a critical reinterpretation of the discourse of Islamic Unity developed in the post-Ottoman period, arguing that even the pan-Islamist policies of Abdulhamid II were shaped in parallel with British interests.⁴⁹⁹

The intellectual lineage of Islamism is also scrutinized. The idealization of modernist figures like Jamal al-Din al-Afghani, despite their relationships with Western imperialists, is questioned. The connections these figures established in their discourses with nationalism and modernism are seen as having emptied the idea of Islamic Unity, making these movements susceptible to co-option under colonial conditions.⁵⁰⁰ Sayyid Qutb's revolutionary discourses are evaluated critically, with the suggestion that his ideas were instrumentalized by the US during the Cold War against Soviet influence, promoted with a focus on violence.⁵⁰¹ Consequently, the Brotherhood is seen as having fragmented into various sloganistic and activist factions, losing its ideological depth.

This trajectory is argued to have a direct parallel in Türkiye. The political environment shaped by the rise and fall of the RP is presented not as a domestic phenomenon but as a regional "model" exported during the Arab Spring, a product of designed political engineering rather than spontaneous popular movements. The journal warns of the disaster of Türkiye's "Egyptianization,"⁵⁰² positioning the influence of translated works and foreign-trained scholars as a shallow penetration that created a "schizophrenic state of consciousness" and led to the proliferation of "people who look down on the nation they belong to

⁴⁹⁷ Salih Gezgici, "'Sam' Yeliyle Yellenmiş Yeşil Postu Cüdamı, Kime Yeşillense Zaten Getirmiş Köhne 'Bahar'ı!," *Çelimli Çalım*, no. 18 (Aralık 2015): 17–19.

⁴⁹⁸ Ibid., 18.

⁴⁹⁹ Ibid., 17.

⁵⁰⁰ Ibid.

⁵⁰¹ Ibid., 18.

⁵⁰² Ibid., 19.

intellectually, but follow its level emotionally."⁵⁰³ This is summarized by the statement: "Those who busy themselves with shallow books and rootless thoughts are labeled 'radical.'"

The discursive inconsistency of these movements is highlighted as evidence of their lack of foundation. The fact that cadres who said "democracy is polytheism (*shirk*)" in the 1980s began saying "democracy is monotheism (*tawhid*)" in the 2000s is evaluated as an indicator of an ideological transformation driven by opportunism rather than principle.⁵⁰⁴ The journal suggests that some groups unable to adapt to this rupture radicalized and turned to armed structures abroad, with Türkiye used as an "ideological laboratory." The emergence of structures like Al-Qaeda and ISIS is presented as the endpoint of a historical trajectory where Islamism became globally identified with "terror," solidifying the formula "Muslim = terrorist" after 9/11. The perception of contemporary conflicts as "jihad" is dismissed as an ahistorical illusion, arguing that many such conflicts ultimately serve the political balance of unbelief (*kufi*) rather than Islamic liberation.⁵⁰⁵ The reactions following the Charlie Hebdo attack are critiqued through a similar lens, arguing that "unconscious" Muslims were maneuvered into aligning with a Western-defined agenda, assigned the "role of the executioner" for an internal Western reckoning.⁵⁰⁶

The activities of Islamist groups, particularly through NGOs, are subjected to severe criticism. The transformation of foreign aid into state policy is afflicted by "ahistoricity" and a "lack of consciousness," argued to lead the nation to neglect domestic issues while ultimately serving the interests of the global balance of power. This is crystallized in the symbolic argument that "the first place where the Turk will carry his borders will be Mecca," emphasizing that even jihadist discourse must be bounded by a *millî* (national) and historical context. From this standpoint, prioritizing global aid before establishing internal peace and

⁵⁰³ Durmuş Küçükşakalak, "Kim IŞİD'in Neresine Düşer," *Çelimli Çalım*, no. 5 (Kasım 2014): 3.

⁵⁰⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁰⁵ Ibid., 4.

⁵⁰⁶ Durmuş Küçükşakalak, "Mal Bulmuş Mağribiler Cihadını Paris'te Eyler," *Çelimli Çalım*, no. 8 (Şubat 2015): 3.

unity equates to "gains for unbelief."⁵⁰⁷ Even symbolically charged actions like the Mavi Marmara are evaluated not as manifestations of Islamic consciousness but as a desire to engage in conflict zones defined by the West.⁵⁰⁸

This comprehensive critique naturally extends to the issue of Palestine and Jerusalem, representing a significant deviation from mainstream Islamist and popular discourse. The phrase "our first qibla" is criticized, as the change of the qibla from Jerusalem to the Kaaba is evaluated not merely as a historical event but as a fundamental creedal rupture where the Islamic community established its independent line from the People of the Book.⁵⁰⁹ From this perspective, orientation towards the qibla is not only a direction of worship but also a political, cultural, and ontological orientation that legitimizes the concept of "homeland" (*vatan*): "The lands we live on gained their characteristic of being our homeland by accepting the Kaaba as our direction."⁵¹⁰

Consequently, any intense interest in events outside Türkiye that Turks do not focus on by "their own will" is evaluated as "entering the interest area of the unbelievers," with the focus on Palestine being the most obvious example.⁵¹¹ The journal argues that while many Islamic lands have suffered similar fates, only Jerusalem is highlighted because it is an "international capital" and holds strategic importance for religious Jews, not because it is a lost Islamic province.⁵¹² This selective outrage is questioned, asking why similar sensitivity is not shown for *Misak-ı Millî*: "Why do those who never stop talking about Palestine avoid uttering the words *Misak-ı Millî* and the lands mentioned in the *Misak-ı Millî*?"⁵¹³ The current Middle Eastern border order is framed as engineered by Western powers, a process in which Türkiye's own borders were determined at a negotiating table with the French and

⁵⁰⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁰⁸ Ibid., 4.

⁵⁰⁹ Fikret Demir, "Türkiye'nin Kiblesi," *Çelimli Çalım*, no. 18 (Aralık 2015): 25.

⁵¹⁰ Ibid., 26.

⁵¹¹ Küçükşakalak, "Mal Bulmuş Mağribiler Cihadını Paris'te Eyler," 3.

⁵¹² Ibid.

⁵¹³ Gömrülü, "Balfour Deklarasyonu," *Çelimli Çalım*, no. 11 (Mayıs 2015): 16.

English, not with Syrians or Iraqis.⁵¹⁴ Therefore, an agenda fixated on Jerusalem, as if the qibla had not been changed, is seen as part of a plan to make Türkiye cease being Türkiye, and one must question who benefits from this "imposed" interest – Muslims or Jews.⁵¹⁵ Those who stay away from these deviations are, in the journal's discourse, "those who take their Turkishness seriously."⁵¹⁶

4.6. İMDER's Language Policies

Çelimli Çalım presents Turkish not as an ordinary means of communication but as a direct carrier of Islamic existence, where alphabet is the guarantee of religious and political belonging.⁵¹⁷ This understanding posits that language is a historical ontology intertwined with belief, arguing that Turkish is a language shaped by the Qur'an and hadith, making it impossible to consider its semantic world independently from Islam.⁵²⁰ *Türk milleti* is thus defined as a nation that "came into existence by reading the Qur'an," with the sounds of the Qur'an circulating in the capillaries of the Turkish language.⁵²¹

This perspective interprets the Alphabet Reform not as a purification of Arabic and Persian elements but as a distortion of meaning, placing etymological analyses on an ideological foundation.⁵²² It strives to reveal the Islamic etymological connections of words, even those entrenched in daily speech, to make this linguistic continuity visible. For example, the journal presents the inclusion of over twenty different words like "*tokmak*" (mallet), "*takunya*" (clog), "*teke*" (billy goat), and "*tökezlemek*" (to stumble) into the same semantic network by rooting

⁵¹⁴ Ibid.

⁵¹⁵ Küçükşakalak, "Mal Bulmuş Mağribiler Cihadını Paris'te Eyler," 3.

⁵¹⁶ Ibid.

⁵¹⁷ Muhammed Sarı, "Uçuk Hayaller ve Buçuk İşler Karşısında Eskimez Yazımız," *Çelimli Çalım*, no. 7 (Ocak 2015): 12–13.

⁵¹⁸ Aksu, "Bizim Yazımız," 14.

⁵¹⁹ Fikret Demir, "Ahde Vefa ve İman: Kim/ner-de imiş," *Çelimli Çalım*, no. 7 (Ocak 2015): 10.

⁵²⁰ Özaydın, "Adımız da Bizi İslam'dan Ayırmaya Mânidir, Kelimelerimiz de," 6.

⁵²¹ Ibid.

⁵²² Lürfi Özaydın, "Tavk," *Çelimli Çalım*, no. 16 (Ekim 2015): 7.

them in the Islamically referenced word "*tavk*" as an expression of this understanding of continuity.⁵²³ Similar etymological analyses in many issues strive to concretize the connection between Islam and Turkish.

In the journal's narrative, the Qur'anic origin of Turkish is not merely a philological exercise but a source of moral and political claims. For instance, the fact that words like "*ziynet*" (adornment) and "*ziyan*" (loss, damage) share the same root is presented as an indicator of an Islamic understanding of aesthetics and responsibility: if adornment does not serve an afterlife-centered purpose, it turns into loss.⁵²⁴

The Alphabet Reform is viewed not only as a technical change but as a symbol of a historical rupture and even an ontological destruction. The discourse of "we will take back our alphabet" contains the demand that İstiklâl Marşı should be re-socialized in its original written form.^{525 526 527 528} A return to the "original alphabet" is seen as the means for *Türk milleti* to "remember what it has lost."^{529 530} The journal refers to the alphabet with terms like "Turkish," "Qur'anic letters," "Turkish alphabet," "Islamic alphabet," "the everlasting alphabet" ("*eskimez yazı*"), or "Islamic letters," using these concepts as points of faith-based resistance against modernization.^{531 532 533}

According to *Çelimli Çalım*, the organic link established between alphabet and Muslim Turkish identity involves a systematic alternative imagination developed directly against the Republic's modernization paradigm. The journal interprets the May 27 coup not merely as a political intervention but also as a cultural fortification that ensured the preservation of the alphabet reform, arguing that the popular tendency

⁵²³ Ibid.

⁵²⁴ Lütfi Özaydın, "Ziyan Zinettedir, Fenalık da Fanide," *Çelimli Çalım*, no. 15 (Eylül 2015): 4.

⁵²⁵ Özel, "Allah'a Kaçın; İstiklâl Marşı Ezberini Bozmayın," 24.

⁵²⁶ Aksu, "Bizim Yazımız," 15.

⁵²⁷ Özel, "Çelimli Çalım'ın Hitamı," *back cover*.

⁵²⁸ Toprak, "Vav'lı Türk'ün Kuyruğuna Yapışanlar," 8.

⁵²⁹ Göbel, "Vav'lı Emancipation versus Kalın Türk," 4.

⁵³⁰ Toprak, "Vav'lı Türk'ün Kuyruğuna Yapışanlar," 8.

⁵³¹ Muhammed Sarı, "Uçuk Hayaller ve Buçuk İşler Karşısında Eskimez Yazımız," *Çelimli Çalım*, no. 7 (Ocak 2015): 12–13.

⁵³² Aksu, "Bizim Yazımız," 14.

⁵³³ Demir, "Ahde Vefa ve İman: Kim/ner-de imiş," *Çelimli Çalım*, no. 7 (Ocak 2015): 10.

during the Democrat Party era to return to the Qur'anic alphabet was suppressed through the coup.⁵³⁴ It contends that the Alphabet Reform, via Latin letters, allowed low-quality individuals to gain intellectual legitimacy while "real intellectuals" were pushed out of the system, thus reading the reforms as a tool for class and cultural restructuring.⁵³⁵

The journal's critique extends beyond the Latin alphabet to also challenge the modern concept of "Ottoman Turkish." *Çelimli Çalım* also criticizes the expression "Ottoman Turkish" alongside the broader discourse and related government policies promoting it. From the journal's perspective, a language termed "Ottoman Turkish" never historically existed; what existed was simply "Turkish that emerged through the Qur'anic letters"⁵³⁶ This view is captured in its emphatic assertion: "Even a superficial glance reveals how baseless this expression is. There was a language called Turkish long before the Ottoman entity came into existence." The journal reinforces this argument by pointing to foundational Turkish literary works, such as *Yunus Emre Divanı*, which originated long before the Ottoman era.⁵³⁷ If the teaching of "Ottoman Turkish" is intended not to bring about a return to Turkish language and identity but merely to provide "cultural capital," or if it is designed as one of the "symbolic gestures of conservatism," then it is seen as another step that victimizes Muslims.⁵³⁸ By rejecting the prevailing discourse on "Ottoman Turkish," the journal reflects distinctly delineates Association's language policy: "Our path does not intersect with those who claim that by teaching Ottoman Turkish as an elective course one can merely understand what is written on tombstones."⁵³⁹ This approach, which interprets such teaching as a symbolic conservative display, instead proposes the reconstruction of language education on the basis of "Islamic fidelity."⁵⁴⁰

⁵³⁴ Göbel, "Sermayesi Latin Harfleri Olanın Burnu Pislikten Kurtulmaz," 3.

⁵³⁵ Ibid., 3-4.

⁵³⁶ Aksu, "Bizim Yazımız," 14.

⁵³⁷ Göbel, "Garantili Osmanlıcılık," 3.

⁵³⁸ Sarı, "Uçuk Hayaller ve Buçuk İşler Karşısında Eskimez Yazımız," 12.

⁵³⁹ Demir, "Ahde Vefa ve İman: Kim/ner-de imiş," 10.

⁵⁴⁰ Ibid.

4.7. “Equestrian Life” versus Modernization

Çelimli Çalım posits that modern lifestyles are not merely technical choices but forms of existence intrinsically linked to faith. It is argued that the Qur’anic and hadith injunctions to “keep horses”⁵⁴¹ refer not to any modern technological substitute but to a specific, faith-based cultural imperative. Thus, a return to an equestrian way of life is presented not as nostalgia but as a vital cultural and religious duty.

The journal highlights the deep symbolic significance of the horse in Turkish culture. The sentence “*Ali ata bak*” (Ali, look at the horse), famously taught in primary schools during the Republican era, is interpreted not merely as a linguistic exercise but as a reflection of the horse’s central place in the Turkish psyche. The etymological origin of the military rank “*mareşal*” (marshal) is traced to “horse caretaker,” and an old adage – “to defeat the Turk, one must first dismount them from their horse” – is invoked to suggest that the ideal of a “life on horseback” remains a powerful element of collective memory.⁵⁴²

This symbolic connection is further illustrated by the public’s vernacular renaming of the DP as “*Demir Kırat*” (The Iron Grey Horse). Given the “*Kırat*” motif’s strong associations with resistance and mobility in Turkish folklore, this is seen as a meaningful, rather than coincidental, appropriation. The DP’s own use of the slogan “*Demir Kırat Şahlanıyor*” (The Iron Grey Horse Rears Up) is interpreted as a strategic adoption of this potent symbol.⁵⁴³ Ironically, however, the DP era accelerated the very process that eliminated the horse from daily Turkish life.⁵⁴⁴

The journal provides a detailed narrative of this decline. While early Republican agriculture relied heavily on animal power (horses and oxen), the mechanization drive accelerated by the Marshall Plan during the DP period fundamentally transformed this structure. The widespread adoption of tractors, particularly in regions like Çukurova,

⁵⁴¹ Mehmet Ali Yeşil, “At-Avrat-Silah,” *Çelimli Çalım*, no. 12 (Haziran 2015): 17.

⁵⁴² Mehmet Ali Yeşil, “O Zaman Atlıydık,” *Çelimli Çalım*, no. 3 (Eylül 2015): 10.

⁵⁴³ Mehmet Ali Yeşil, “Kırat’ın Değerin Sorarsın Kaça,” *Çelimli Çalım*, no. 8 (Şubat 2015): 25-26.

⁵⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 27.

led to a severe decline in the horse population.⁵⁴⁵ So-called “horse breeding improvement” programs are claimed to have weakened native breeds, making them more susceptible to disease. A major outbreak of glanders in the 1960s, which killed thousands of horses, coincided with the disbanding of army cavalry units, further cementing the horse’s obsolescence.⁵⁴⁶ Although mechanization increased agricultural productivity, *Çelimli Çalım* frames the loss of the horse as both an economic and a symbolic devastation for small farmers. The journal notes a brief resurgence of horse-based agriculture during the 1930s global economic crisis, when tractor use temporarily declined, but confirms that from the 1950s onwards, the tractor’s dominance nearly erased the horse from farming, playing a critical role in the transformation – and dissolution – of traditional rural life.⁵⁴⁷

This transformation is framed not as neutral progress but as a social and cultural intervention. Türkiye’s post-war investment priorities, shaped more by the interests of foreign aid providers than local needs, led to a disintegration of the rural social fabric; small producers were marginalized while large landowners prospered. This process, which began with the commercialization of agriculture after the 1838 Treaty of *Balta Limanı* and the 1858 Land Code that recognized private property, manifested in the Republican period as mass migration, dispossession, and the disappearance of traditional production forms like sharecropping.^{548 549 550} The introduction of the tractor is thus presented as the culmination of a long-term project that altered not just farming methods but the very worldview of the peasantry.⁵⁵¹

This critical framework is further substantiated by the personal testimony and interpretation of İsmet Özel, the intellectual leader of İstiklâl Marşı Derneği, who characterizes the elimination of the horse as

⁵⁴⁵ Mehmet Ali Yeşil, “Atın Ölümü Arpadan Değil!,” *Çelimli Çalım*, no. 14 (Ağustos 2015): 13–17.

⁵⁴⁶ Ibid., 15–16.

⁵⁴⁷ Ibid., 16.

⁵⁴⁸ Ibid., 14–15.

⁵⁴⁹ Ibid., 13–14.

⁵⁵⁰ Yeşil, “Kırat’ın Değerin Sorarsın Kaça,” 25–27.

⁵⁵¹ Ibid.

an “*at katliâmî*” (horse massacre) and attributes the meaning of a strategic assault to this process. According to Özel, depriving Turks of their horses was aimed at reducing them to a “state of beggary” (*dilenci durumuna sokmak*), and this elimination, which occurred in two waves in the late 1940s and early 1960s, intended to weaken the potential of Turks as a military force. Contrary to the modern understanding, Özel argues that “horses raise people” (*atlar insanları yetiştirir*), not the other way around, asserting that the relationship established with horses endows humans with a 'superior spiritual virtue' (*daha üstün bir ruhi meziyet*). His vision points to a will to revive a horse-centric economic and social model – not limited to mere criticism but encompassing the importation of horses from Mongolia and the revitalization of waterways in Türkiye. Özel's perspective reinforces *Çelimli Çalım*'s analysis, which portrays mechanization as a civilizational rupture, and demonstrates that the association's critique is not merely a nostalgia for the past but part of an alternative vision for the future.⁵⁵²

4.8. Conclusion on Çelimli Çalım

The thematic analysis conducted in this chapter has revealed *Çelimli Çalım* to be the central platform where the theoretical foundations of İstiklâl Marşı Derneği are articulated into a cohesive ideological system. The identified themes – alternative historical readings, the critique of capitalism and Turkish identity, democracy and human rights, the “New Türkiye” discourse, Islamic movements, and language policies – form an interlocking narrative that systematically constructs a worldview challenging the foundational myths of the Republican era.

This methodological approach demonstrates that the journal's primary function is to translate principle into a comprehensive lens for interpreting the world. Its discourse is remarkably consistent, applying a unified ideological framework across a wide spectrum of issues, from constitutional debates to daily life. However, this very consistency

⁵⁵² “Çelimli Çalım: Kimin Çalımı Kime?” panel konuşmalarından alıntılar, *Çelimli Çalım*, no. 5 (Ekim 2014): arka kapak.

reveals the project's fundamental limitation. The journal's intellectual rigor, its reliance on Ottoman Turkish, dense historical references, and polemical tone cultivate a sophisticated but hermetic discourse. While this ensures ideological coherence within a dedicated vanguard, it inherently limits broader appeal. Themes like "Thick Turk" versus "Vav Turk" serve as powerful boundary markers that reinforce the group's insular character.

In conclusion, the thematic analysis provides conclusive evidence that İMDER has developed a detailed and internally consistent ideological map. Yet, this same analysis confirms that this articulation has primarily produced a "community of discourse" rather than a bridge to mass political mobilization. The journal embodies the central paradox of the association: its strength as an intellectual project is precisely what constrains its potential as a broad-based political force.

Conclusion

This thesis has analyzed, through an interdisciplinary perspective, the effort of İsmet Özel's theoretical vision —one of the most original and cutting-edge figures in modern Turkish intellectual life— to assume an institutional form via İstiklâl Marşı Derneği shaped around him, and the inherent limits of this effort. The central question of the study was whether Özel's profound and holistic critique of modernity, capitalism, and Western civilization remained merely an individual intellectual position or could transform into a concrete organization and a claim to a "political project" through İMDER. As a result of the comprehensive examination and the rich findings, two main and interconnected conclusions were reached: First, İsmet Özel's thought has been institutionalized within İMDER in a highly consistent, profound, and all-encompassing manner at the theoretical, symbolic, and practical levels. Second, and more decisively, this institutional structure has failed to demonstrate the capacity to transform into a mass political movement due to structural reasons such as dependency on charismatic leadership, intellectual elitism, a lack of mass mobilization, and an uncompromising stance towards the pragmatism inherently involved in politics. Ultimately, İMDER has exhibited the character of a "community of thought" or a "theoretical-practical community of resistance" that

opposes the system at an intellectual and cultural level, rather than being a power project.

The sections forming the historical and theoretical framework of the thesis revealed that İsmet Özel's thought is a holistic critical system that characterizes the modern world-system as a "false religion" and radically rejects all its technological, economic, philosophical, and theological dimensions. Özel positions Islam as the only true alternative to this system and demands from the Muslim individual "conscious alienation" and "maintaining intransigence." His emphasis on Turkishness expresses not an ethnic affiliation but a historical mission of bearing the standard of Islam and a state of ontological intransigence with the capitalist-imperialist Western order. İMDER has been analyzed as an institutional ground where this radical theoretical framework is attempted to be embodied. The Association reads İstiklâl Marşı not only as a national anthem but also as a manifesto, a constitutional text, an economic policy, and a lifestyle program. The thesis's empirical analyses systematically demonstrated how İMDER, through instruments such as its publication *Çelimli Çalım* journal, the Pazar Ola Cooperative, the İstiklâl Calendar, and TİYO publications, translates Özel's theoretical system into institutional practices and the finest details of daily life—language, perception of time, consumption habits, aesthetics. *Çelimli Çalım*'s redefinition of the modernization process from the Tanzimat to the Republic as a "chain of rupture and betrayals," its typology of "Thick Turk" (*Kalın Türk*) versus "Vav Turk" (*Vav'lı Türk*) understanding of "Turkism," and its emphasis on economic independence through the slogan "there can be no *millî* unity without a *millî* market," have made İMDER one of the most comprehensive and consistent examples in Türkiye regarding the institutionalization of an intellectual vision.

However, for a structure to qualify as a "political project," beyond theoretical consistency, it requires a concrete strategy aimed at power, an achievable program for social transformation, and an organizational model capable of mobilizing broad masses. The findings of the thesis show that İMDER faces apparent and difficult-to-overcome limitations at this point. Viewed from a Max Weberian framework, İMDER is clearly a

charismatic structure shaped around İsmet Özel's "extraordinary" poet-intellectual personality. Özel's thought and presence constitute both the association's strongest source of legitimacy and its most fragile point. This leader-centric structure is inherently problematic in terms of institutional continuity and massification. A detailed thematic analysis of *Çelimli Çalım* revealed that the association's discourse and style are laden with dense historical references, use of Ottoman Turkish, and theoretical depth, which, while making the discourse extremely rich and consistent, also renders it understandable only to a narrow segment with a specific intellectual accumulation. This intellectual elitism has created a thick distance from the simple, plain, emotionally connective, and mass-appealing language required for mass politics, preventing İMDER from moving beyond being a "vanguard cadre" movement. More importantly, İMDER's emphasis on "intransigence with the system" and "spiritual purity" has distanced it from the necessities inherently involved in politics, such as bargaining, forming alliances, tactical maneuvering, and taking pragmatic steps. Statements like "We will not enter an election we will lose" and "We will only become a party when we are in a position to come to power" reflect, alongside strategic caution, an attitude that deems the existing political arena as dirty and desires to build a pure alternative outside of it. When evaluated in light of Sidney Tarrow's "political opportunity structure" and Charles Tilly's WUNC (Worthiness, Unity, Numbers, Commitment) criteria, it is observed that İMDER remains extremely weak in the "Numbers" dimension and is only successful in establishing "Worthiness" and "Unity" within its own narrow and elite circle.

With this comprehensive analysis, this study has made three fundamental contributions by filling a significant gap in the existing literature. Firstly, while studies on Islamism and political thought in Türkiye are often focused on textual analyses or party-politics, this thesis has offered a new theoretical perspective for understanding the ideology-organization relationship by examining how an intellectual vision is (or is not) embodied in an organized structure. Secondly, the systematic examination of *Çelimli Çalım* through thematic analysis

methods has revealed the main themes (history, identity, language, politics) of the association's ideology shaped around a publication and created an innovative methodological model for analyzing the text-institution relationship. Thirdly and finally, while a large part of the studies on İsmet Özel have focused on his poetry and individual intellectual transformation, this thesis has filled this gap in the literature by centering on how Özel's thought comes to life in an institutional structure and the limits of its effort to politicize.

This thesis, by focusing on the internal coherence and institutionalization of Özel's thought, has largely excluded an examination of his external influence. However, the indirect impact of İMDER on wider political and public discourse emerges as a promising area for future research. A promising avenue for future research would be to analyze the reception and diffusion of İMDER's key concepts into broader political and public discourse in Türkiye. For instance, the concept of "*millî mutabakat metni*" (the national consensus document), which İsmet Özel emphatically defined as the status of İstiklâl Marşı, has later appeared in high-level political speeches, parliamentary documents, and even academic works. Investigating the trajectory of such concepts would shed further light on the often-indirect ways in which intellectual movements can exert influence beyond their immediate organizational confines.

Similarly, another limitation of this study and a potential area for future research is the inability to conduct an in-depth analysis of the relationship between the alternative historical narratives presented in the journal *Çelimli Çalım* and historical reality. Since the journal is an ideological platform rather than an academic publication, the theses it puts forward are largely unsupported by documents or standard historical methodology. As this thesis has focused on understanding İMDER's worldview and how this worldview is reflected in *Çelimli Çalım*, it has examined the functions of these narratives within İsmet Özel's theoretical framework and their contribution to İMDER's ideological positioning, rather than their historical accuracy. However, the claims put forward by *Çelimli Çalım* regarding Ottoman modernization, the

Early Republican period, and the construction of Turkish identity constitute a fertile ground for investigation in future research, particularly research positioned at the intersection of intellectual history and historiography. Such a study would make a significant contribution to our understanding of the methodological foundations of alternative historical readings in Islamist/conservative circles and their dialectical relationship with official historical narratives in Türkiye.

In conclusion, İstiklâl Marşı Derneği is a significant and rare initiative that has successfully embodied İsmet Özel's radical and holistic theoretical vision against modernity at an institutional level. Its effort to construct an alternative imagination of language, history, identity, time, and economy has made it a "community of thought" that leaves a deep intellectual mark within the anti-modernist tradition in modern Turkish intellectual life. However, its dependency on charismatic leadership, intellectual elitism, lack of mass mobilization capability, and closed stance towards political pragmatism have prevented it from realizing its claim to become a mass transformative force as a "political project." İMDER has not been a decisive actor on the political stage. Yet, this does not overshadow its historical and intellectual importance. On the contrary, İMDER retains its value as a rich, complex, and highly instructive laboratory example in Türkiye's intellectual history for how a thinker's vision can transform into an institutional memory, concrete practices, and the rituals of daily life. This thesis, by revealing the workings, achievements, and ultimate limits of this laboratory, aims to provide a critical conceptual map for understanding similar intellectual-organizational adventures.



Appendix A. Sample Materials from *Çelimli Çalım*

Figure A1. Cover of *Çelimli Çalım*, Issue 3 (September 2014). Source: *Çelimli Çalım* Archive.



Zilka'de 1435 - Sayı 3Yalın Temiz AcımasızFiyat: 2,5 TL

İSTİKLÂL HARBİ BİTTİ DİYENLER TASFİYE EDİLMELİ!

İstiklâl Marşı Derneği Genel Başkanı Şair İsmet Özel, Derneğin internet portalinde Cumhurbaşkanlığı seçimleri ile alakalı iki yazı neşretti: "ABD Kemalist Türkiye'ye Hiçbir Şans Tanımadı" ve "Demek İsterdim... Diyebiliyor muyum?" Bunun üzerine biz de Çelimli Çalım yazı heyeti olarak kendisiyle mezkûr yazılarına dair bir mülakat gerçekleştirdik.

"Türkiye'nin AKP'den zarar gördüğünü söylemek de yanlış, Türkiye'nin AKP'den fayda gördüğünü de söylemek yanlış. Yani böyle bir şey yok. Kimse'nin Türklere bir şey bıraktığı yok. Hepinizin bildiği bir şey, bütün bu alınan tedbirlere rağmen bir şekilde 1 Mart tezkeresinin geçmiş olması o tezkereye hayır diyenlerin siyasi hayatlarının sona ermesi ile sonuçlandığını söylüyorlar. Onları bir daha mecliste kimse görmedi diyorlar."

"O kadar çok şey geçiyor ki kafamdan, susmak zorunda kalıyorum. Çünkü ben Paris'te öldürülen üç kadının tabutlarının üzerine Türk bayrağı kon- saydı, bütün riski göze alıp onların cenaze namazını kılmaya gidecektim. Anlatabiliyor muyum? Çünkü o kadınlar mensup oldukları insanların lehine bir şey yaptıkları için öldürüldüler."

(Onbirinci sayfada)

Namazda Gözü Olmayan Mabedin Göğsünden Ne Anlar?

Durmuş Küçükşakalak

Tarih şuurlundan nasipsizlik başlı başına bir belâdır. İnsan bu belâyı uğrayınca Türk milletin 1916'dan itibaren hacca gitme sebebini savaşlar ve fakirlikle izah eden solculardan veya Tek Parti (CHP) yasakları ve zulümleriyle izah eden sağcılardan biri olur çıkar. (İkinci sayfada)

Müslümanların Müslümanlıkları Neyi İzah Ediyor?

Özcan Çam

Şansı yaver gidenin izahı ne ihtiyacı var? Bugün bir "Yeni Türkiye'den bahsedersen Türkiye'nin ve Türklüğün tarihin modern kısmını izahı kavuşturucu tek ve yegâne unsur olarak hesaba katılmasından zarar görecektir. (Onbeşinci sayfada)

Gezi'nin Mirası Kime Kalacak?

D.Celaleddin Kavas

Gezi'nin mirasına konmak hiçbir çaba gerektirmeyecek. Gezi'nin mirası, ondan kendisine hiçbir şey bulaşmaması maksadıyla hususî tedbir almayan herkesi içine alacak. Gezi'nin mirası şu veya bu şekilde CHP'yi, MHP'yi, HDP'yi ve elbette AKP'yi yutacak. (Yirmikinci sayfada)

O Zaman Atlıydık

Mehmet Ali Yeşil

Cumhuriyet devrinde ilk mekteplerde çocuklara öğretilen manidar tek cümledir "Ali ata bak!" cümlesi. Zira ata bakmak ya da sütçü beygiri olmak arasındaki farkı tebarüz ettiren hayat, at sırtındaki hayatıdır. Bu iki durum arasındaki fark, at sırtındaki sıvazının at sırtında olamayana bakiş neticesinde ortaya çıkan bir farktır. (Onuncu sayfada)

Cim Karnında Bir Nokta

Gökhan Göbel

Noktanın yazımızdaki ehemmiyeti çok büyük. Bu sebeple cim'in karnındaki nokta asla önemsiz yahut ummunda bir katre değildir. Cim karnında bir nokta tabiri lisanımızda cahil, boş kafalı manasına gelir. Bunun sebebi noktanın sıfır olmasıdır. Türk yazısında sıfır bir nokta şeklidir. (Üçüncü sayfada)

Tesirde Israrcıyız

Mustafa Tosun

Buff and Blue ve şürekası dünyaya ve bölgeye hakim gibi görünüyor. Demokrasi ve savaş silahı her iki yanında belinden sarkıyor. Silahlar finans kemerine ilüştürülmüş vaziyette. Biz ise her iki silahtan da, kemenden de korkmuyoruz. Mohicanların somuncusu değiliz. Müslümanların ilki olmaya çalışıyoruz. (Onaltıncı sayfada)

Figure A2. Cover of *Çelimli Çalım*, Issue 7 (January 2015). Source: *Çelimli Çalım* Archive.



Figure A3. Cover of *Çelimli Çalım*, Issue 9 (March 2015). Source: *Çelimli Çalım* Archive.



Figure A4. Cover of *Çelimli Çalım*, Issue 17 (November 2015). Source: *Çelimli Çalım* Archive.



Figure A5. Cover of *Çelimli Çalım*, Issue 18 (December 2015). Source: *Çelimli Çalım* Archive.



Table A1: Thematic Analysis Table of *Çelimli Çalım*

Theme	Sub-themes	Core Arguments / Findings
Alternative Historical Narrative and Critique of Modernization	- Fractures in Turkish history - Critique of official historiography	History is depicted as a series of fractures that suppress an Islamic-national identity; official narratives maintain systemic continuity; history is seen as a responsibility to rebuild the future.
Ottoman Order and Legitimacy	- The Ottoman Empire/Turkish life's last stand - Pragmatic Islamic policies	The Ottoman order is framed as pragmatic and politically focused; the Tanzimat symbolizes the entry into capitalism; both Ottoman romanticism and blind Republicanism are criticized.
Republican Era and Reforms	- The Sakarya Victory and the exclusion of the Islamic spirit - Debate on the founding period of the Republic - Reforms; particularly alphabet and	The Republic is seen as having marginalized Islam; sovereignty debates are held; reforms are evaluated as a cultural break that severed ties with the Islamic heritage.

Theme	Sub-themes	Core Arguments / Findings
Coups and Political Fractures	calendar reforms	
	- The 1960 coup: a colonialist intervention - Liquidation of the national will - State-sponsored political Islam	May 27, 1960, is defined as an "assassination attempt against the nation" and linked to NATO/USA; subsequent Islamic parties are seen as systemic tools rather than organic movements.
Critique of Capitalism and the Global Order	- Capitalism as domination - Globalization as an ideological curtain	Capitalism is described as economic and cultural hegemony; modernity and globalization are treated as masks of capitalism; Turkish identity is presented as a unique form of resistance. Anti-capitalist economic vision (e.g., Pazar Ola)
Turkish Identity and Language	- Faith-based identity - The Ottoman suppression of Turkishness	Turkishness is defined not ethnically but as a faith-based stance; secular-nationalist Turkism is criticized; alphabet reform and script changes are seen as identity engineering.

Theme	Sub-themes	Core Arguments / Findings
Critique of Democracy and Human Rights	- "Turkish with Vav" vs. "Thick Turkish"	
	- Democracy as Western hegemony - Human rights as an ideological tool	Democracy is seen as a system of steering rather than empowerment; human rights discourse is claimed to be Western-centric and to exclude Muslim societies.
The "New Türkiye" Discourse and Constitutional Debates	- Historical continuity of "New Türkiye" slogans - Constitutional language changes - Presidential system as a US imposition	"New Türkiye" is framed as a modernization project that erases identity; constitutional language changes (e.g., <i>hakimiyet</i> → <i>egemenlik</i> [sovereignty]) are seen as a break; the presidential system is evaluated as a US-originated peripheral state model.
Critique of Islamic Movements	- Critique of the Muslim Brotherhood - Imported	Organizations like the Ikhwan are depicted as imperial products; Turkish Islamism is criticized for importing ideas, lacking depth,

Theme	Sub-themes	Core Arguments / Findings
and Jihadist Discourse	Islamism vs. indigenous Islam	and failing to establish a native intellectual foundation.





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